

War of Words: Constructing National Images and International Relations in U.S. and
Chinese News Discourses of Domestic and Foreign Protests

A Thesis

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my parents and family members.

Abstract

In the third decade of the 21st century, the relationship between the United States and China as two economic superpowers is at its most tense since the normalization of their ties in 1979. This project examined two U.S. newspapers, *The New York Times* (NYT) and *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ), and two Chinese news media, *The Global Times* (GT) and *Pengpai*, and analyzed their discourses about the Hong Kong (HK) and Black Lives Matters (BLM) protests. The purpose is not only to compare coverage, but to learn how news media in the U.S. and China constructed each other's national images when the two countries were in crises. Also, it looked at how national interests and international relations, as well as the different journalism fields in the U.S. and China, were reflected in their news coverage of the domestic protests and the overseas protests.

This project analyzed a total of 582 news articles by using constructivism and Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction of reality as the theoretical framework, and discourse analysis as the research method, and found that the national images the U.S. and Chinese formed of each other are not only negative but also similar. The images they constructed not only echoed their strained relations, but also their competition for a global reputation and status as a world leader. Tense Sino-U.S. relations were mirrored in the selected U.S. news coverage of the domestic and international protests, as the overseas protesters were portrayed more positively than domestic protesters, while overseas police were portrayed more negatively than domestic police. Nonetheless, the chosen Chinese news media's negative portrayal of the overseas protesters did not merely break the ancient proverb that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," but suggested that apart from international relations, a country's news discourse about protests might also reflect its cultural and racial background.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

On June 1, 2020, days after the protests over the killing of George Floyd, a Black American, in police custody turned violent, a post from China Central Television (CCTV) went viral on Weibo, a Chinese equivalent of Twitter. The post featured a comment made by Zhao Lijian, a diplomat and a spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, with a hashtag “The Foreign Ministry exposed the truth that the United States is known for having a double-standard.” In the post, Zhao questioned “Why did the US glorify the so-called pro-independence forces in Hong Kong as heroes, but call the protesters disappointed with racism in the U.S. rioters? Why did the U.S. criticize the very restrained Hong Kong police but shoot its domestic protesters and even mobilize its National Guard troops?” (Huang, 2020, para. 5)?¹

This is not the first time the Chinese Foreign Ministry and the Chinese news media indistinguishably accused the United States as a whole of having a double standard. As U.S.-China relations have increasingly deteriorated since the pandemic, “double-standard” has become a commonly seen phrase that the Chinese news media utilize not only to portray the United States, but also the U.S. news media (Global Times, 2020). Elizabeth Economy, Asia Director at the Council on Foreign Relations, explained in an NPR interview that China’s strident narration regarding the U.S. during the pandemic might be their solution to prevent a negative international narrative about China from “seeping into domestic Chinese discourse and undermining the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist

¹ All translations from Mandarin to English in the thesis are the author’s translations

Party” (Feng & Cheng, 2020). Casting a negative light on other countries but a positive light on one’s own country is commonly seen in international media’s news coverage (e.g. Goss, 2015; Olausson, 2010; Rivenburgh, 2000).

Using constructivism and Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) social construction of reality as the theoretical framework and discourse analysis as the research method, this project explores how two U.S. newspapers, *The New York Times* (NYT) and *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ), and two Chinese news media, *The Global Times* (GT) and *Pengpai*, constructed discourses about the Hong Kong (HK) protests in 2019 and the Black Lives Matters (BLM) protests in 2020. This project intends to find out whether and how U.S. and Chinese news media cover domestic protests differently and similarly compared to their coverage of the foreign protests that took place in the opposing country, and how their coverage of the domestic and foreign protests reflects their national identities, national interests, and the countries’ relations with each other.

This goal is achieved by carrying out a four-way comparison: (1) How did the selected U.S. newspapers cover the protest in the United States [domestic protest] compared to the protest in Hong Kong [international protest]? (2) How did the chosen Chinese news media cover the protest in Hong Kong [domestic protest] compared to the protest in the United States [international protest]? (3) How did the U.S. media coverage of a domestic protest compare with the Chinese media coverage of a domestic protest? (4) How did the U.S. media coverage of an international protest compare with the Chinese media coverage of an international protest? In addition, to get a more holistic result regarding how international news coverage of international protests echoes national

interests and international relations, this project analyzed selected British and South Korean news media's coverage of the HK and BLM protests.

At a moment when U.S.-China relations have hit their lowest point, this project also aims to identify the national images that the U.S. and Chinese news media construct of each country in their coverage of the foreign protests—the selected U.S. newspapers' construction of the national image of China in their coverage of the HK protest, and the chosen Chinese news outlets' constitution of the national image of the U.S. in their coverage of the BLM protest. Lastly, while exploring how national images, identities, interests and international relations were constructed in the selected U.S. and Chinese news discourses about the HK and BLM protests, this project also pays attention to how differences in the journalism field between the two countries are echoed in their news coverage of the HK and BLM protests.

This project matters in three aspects. Firstly, Robert Park (1955) argued that it is necessary to consider news as social knowledge, as news plays a pivotal role in providing the type of knowledge that is culturally bounded and socially constructed for their audience by using commonly used and shared languages. The social knowledge that news provides not only helps people make sense of everyday life, but also constructs reality for people (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Possessing different knowledge would lead people to act differently and support distinctive policies. Therefore, by analyzing the realities that U.S. and Chinese news media construct regarding the two protests and the two countries, we might have a basic idea of how people in the two countries perceive the two protests and the two countries, and what policies they support.

Secondly, previous research mainly studied how national identities, national interests and international relations are reflected in news coverage from one country's perspective (i.e., comparative analysis of U.S. news coverage of the domestic BLM protest with its coverage of a protest in Mexico). This project intends to fill the gap by showing how national interests and international relations are echoed in news coverage from both countries' perspectives. In addition, few studies have examined how international relations and national interests are reflected in a third country's news coverage of a foreign protest by forming a control group. Therefore, this project provides a new perspective.

Thirdly, national identities shape the national images that news media construct (Luther, 1999), and news media are mediators that build foreign realities for the public. The national image that the news media portray of a certain country could sway public opinion regarding the country, in turn impacting foreign policies regarding that country (Dell'Orto, 2013). Also, the national image that states form of one another through mass media mirrors how they interact with one another and what expectations they have in their relations (Dell'Orto, 2013). Thus, by examining what images the U.S. and Chinese news media construct of those two countries, it is possible to learn how they interact with each other, what they expect from their relations, and what foreign policies the public in the two countries might support regarding the other country.

This project argues that, as Sino-U.S. relations have deteriorated to the lowest point since their normalization, the national images that the selected U.S. and Chinese news media formed of each other reflected their competition for a global reputation and status as a world leader. Moreover, the selected U.S. news coverage of the domestic and

international protests appeared to correspond to the tense U.S. and China relations, as the overseas protesters were portrayed more positively than domestic protesters, while overseas police and government figures were portrayed more negatively than domestic ones. Nonetheless, the chosen Chinese news media's negative portrayal of the overseas protesters did not merely break the ancient proverb that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," but suggested that in addition to international relations, a country's news discourse about protests might also reflect its cultural and racial background.

Before delving into the theoretical framework and analyzing different discourses that the U.S. and Chinese news media constructed of the two protests, the following section provides context information regarding the special status of Hong Kong, the two protests and U.S.-China relations.

The Special Status of Hong Kong

Hong Kong was a British colony for over 150 years. After the loss of the Opium War in 1842, China first ceded part of Hong Kong, Hong Kong island, and then leased the rest of Hong Kong to the U.K. for 99 years (Cheung & Hughes, 2020). In the 1980s, as the deadline for the lease came to a close, the Chinese government insisted that the whole Hong Kong area should go back to Chinese rule. Thus, the British and Chinese governments agreed that Hong Kong would be returned to China in 1997 and become a special administration area of China that was governed under the principle of "one country, two systems." This meant the city became part of China, but it would maintain its special economic, political and legal arrangements for 50 years (Cheung & Hughes, 2020). Nonetheless, despite its unique political, economic and legal status, the Chinese Central

government maintains the right to interpret Hong Kong's basic laws, which means all changes to political processes need approval from not only the Hong Kong government, but also the top Chinese legislative body (Council on Foreign Relations [CFR], 2021). Moreover, the Chinese Central government only allows Hong Kong to build up its external relations in areas such as trade, communications, tourism and culture, but not diplomacy and defense. Also, in the latest chief executive election in 2017, only candidates who were checked by committees that were nominated by Beijing had the permission to run for office (CFR, 2021). Therefore, in spite of Hong Kong's special political, economic and legal rights, it is supposed to obey Beijing's orders.

The Hong Kong Protest

In early June 2019, thousands of Hong Kongers filled up the streets to protest against the legislation of a bill, which would allow fugitives to be transferred to any country that made a request to extradite criminal suspects, thus automatically including Taiwan and Mainland China (BBC, 2019). The proposal of the extradition plan was due to a criminal case that took place in Taiwan. A Hong Kong couple went to Taiwan for a trip. The man strangled the woman and dumped her body in bushes near a subway station in Taipei (Victor & May, 2019). The man was arrested by the Hong Kong police, but could not face charges until being transferred to Taiwan, where he committed the crime. Nonetheless, there was no law that allowed for such transfer, which in turn led the Hong Kong government to propose an extradition plan. However, the plan soon aroused anger from Hong Kongers. They worried the plan would be a "Trojan Horse," which, on the surface, was bringing justice to the murder victim, but in fact, might allow officials to send activists

and dissidents in Hong Kong to the mainland to face trial, undermining Hong Kong's autonomy (Ramzy, 2019).

Most of the protests were peaceful, but some turned violent. On June 12, 2019, protesters gathered around the Hong Kong Legislative Complex to prevent lawmakers from discussing the bill. Some protesters threw rocks at the police and smashed the windows of the Legislative Council Complex. The police, on the other hand, dispersed the demonstrators with tear gas and used it as a routine practice (AP, 2020). In mid-June, as thousands gathered outside the Legislative Council Complex and as hundreds of thousands of protesters requested, the bill was suspended. After the suspension was announced, more people decided to join the protest and asked for a full withdrawal of the bill. Furthermore, from Seoul to Sydney, London to New York, their protests were joined by overseas Hong Kongers, although the movement also drew counter protests from the mainlanders. In September, with no ending sign of the protests, Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam announced a full withdrawal of the bill (AP, 2020).

However, the protest continued even though the bill was withdrawn. It turned extremely violent in November 2019, as protesters occupied and blockaded a number of college campuses to fight with the police outside. They used petrol bombs against the police. The police shot tear gas and used water cannons towards them. The protest did not end until the eruption of coronavirus cases, which limited the possibilities for people to gather. Later on, in May 2020, the Chinese congress passed the National Security Law in Hong Kong, which criminalized any actions related to “secession—breaking away from the country, subversion—undermining the power or authority of the central government,

terrorism—using violence or intimidation against people, collusion with foreign or external forces” (BBC, 2020, para.2). The law led more people to fear the erosion of “one country, two systems” in Hong Kong (AP, 2020).

Even though the Hong Kong protest did not take place in mainland China, as explained above, people protested for abolishing the extradition law and protested against the Chinese government, as they are afraid that the law would grant the Chinese government more power to extradite people from Hong Kong. Therefore, this project considers it as a domestic protest in China.

Black Lives Matter Protest

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd bought a pack of cigarettes at a corner store, Cup Foods, in South Minneapolis. He paid for the cigarettes with a \$20 bill. Then, after he left, a teenage clerk called 911 to report that the bill he had given was fake (Bogel-Burroughs & Healy, 2020). Floyd was sitting in his car outside the store when a white police officer, Derek Chauvin, responded to the clerk’s call, handcuffed and pinned Floyd to the ground under his knees for nearly ten minutes (*The New York Times*, 2020). Even though Floyd claimed multiple times “I can’t breathe,” Chauvin did not move his knee away from Floyd’s neck, and his action finally led to the death of Floyd (*The New York Times*, 2020). Their interactions were captured by pedestrians. The video footage they released went viral on social media. Demonstrators started to gather on the streets of Minneapolis to protest against racial injustices on May 26 (Taylor, 2021). Then, protests also took place in other cities across the U.S. such as Los Angeles, New York, Boston and Louisville, Kentucky.

After two nights of peaceful protests, while most of the protests remained peaceful, some of the protests turned violent. Some protesters looted Target stores, and some set multiple buildings on fire. The police reacted to the protesters brutally by using tear gas and rubber bullets. The situation in Minnesota was controlled as Gov. Tim Walz mobilized the National Guard. The four officers who were involved in this case were fired. Former officer Chauvin was charged with second-degree murder in June, and the other three were charged with aiding and abetting second-degree murder (*The New York Times*, 2020).

Protesters' actions against racial injustice did not end as Mr. Chauvin was charged. Some kept protesting in Portland in July. The police officers' shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin, led to a new round of protest for racial justice. Moreover, people outside the U.S. in countries such as Canada, Britain, Sweden, Turkey, Japan and Brazil also marched against racial injustice and police brutality (Taylor, 2020).

This project chose to compare the U.S. and Chinese news coverage of the HK and BLM protests because government officials in the U.S. and China not only have commented about each other's behavior, but also have blamed each other for the ways they have handled their domestic protests—U.S. government officials criticized the Chinese government's handling of the HK protests, and the Chinese government criticized how the U.S. government dealt with the BLM protests. So, they raised essential questions about the character of each country as shown in handling the respective protest movements (Crowley & Wong, 2019; Zhang et al., 2020). Despite the fact that the HK protest and the BLM protest are two different types of protests—the HK protest fought for protection of their basic rights not to be undermined by the extradition law and the mainland Chinese

government, and the BLM protest fought for racial justice – both protests are fighting for civil rights. Additionally, both the HK and BLM protests attracted a lot of international attention and had transnational participation, which in turn received a large amount of international news coverage. Also, even though the driving issues were long-standing, both protests represented peaks in the movements. The Hong Kong protest in 2019 was the largest one since 2003, in which people also protested against the legislation of a controversial security bill (Cheung & Hughes, 2020). The BLM protest in 2020 is also the largest one in years. *The New York Times*' (2020) data shows that the protests peaked on June 6, 2020, as more than half a million people from 550 places across the U.S. participated.

Another reason this project chooses to compare the two protests is that they are suitable cases to explore how national identity and interests were reflected in news coverage and how the two countries strategically used the media images to compete with each other during a time when U.S. and China relations soured. As one protest took place in China, and one protest took place in the U.S., it is convenient to compare how news media cover the protest in “my” country differently from covering the protest in “your” country, and compare results between the two countries. Furthermore, by examining how U.S. and Chinese news media cover the protests that took place in the other country, we can learn how they construct the national images of each other.

To understand how national identities are reflected in news coverage and to learn what national images the U.S. and China form of each other, it is necessary to understand

U.S.-China relations. Therefore, the following section will explore the relations between the two countries specifically.

U.S.- China Relations

U.S.-China relations have only been normalized for four decades. The Chinese Communist Party's establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 set its position in the Cold War. Then, China's alliance with North Korea during the Korean War in the 1950s and assistance to North Vietnam to fight against South Vietnam and the U.S. during the Vietnam War in the 1960s all contributed to the hostile relations between the U.S. and China (CFR, 2020). In the 1970s, China's invitation to the U.S. ping-pong team and President Nixon's visit to China showed a warming sign of the U.S. and China relations. However, not until 1979 did President Jimmy Carter's grant of full diplomatic recognition of the PRC lead the U.S. and China to end their tense relationship over thirty years.

Post-1979, there are still ups and downs in U.S.-China relations. For example, in 1989, the Tiananmen Square crackdown of student protesters led the U.S. to freeze its relations with China and stop selling military goods to Beijing. In 1999, NATO's bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade made Sino-U.S. relations worse. Then, in 2000, President Clinton signed the U.S.-China Relations Act, which not only granted Beijing permanent trade relations with Washington, but also smoothed the path for China to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. In the 2010s, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's article "America's Pacific Century" proposed a U.S. pivot to Asia, which intended to "[increase] investment—diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise—in

the Asia-Pacific region,” and was perceived by Beijing as a move to counter China’s growth. So, Beijing intensely criticized the move (CFR, 2020).

During the Trump administration, U.S.-China relations hit their lowest point since the 1970s. As Sino-U.S. relations worsened, news media in both the U.S. and China started to call it the new “Cold War.” It started in the summer of 2018, during which President Donald Trump announced that his administration would impose taxes on \$34 billion worth of Chinese goods to pressure the country and end unfair trade practices and the theft of U.S. intellectual property (Swanson, 2018). Beijing reacted swiftly to Trump’s announcement by putting a similar amount of tariffs on American products. Furthermore, to echo the Chinese government’s anger, CCTV-6, a movie channel, started to broadcast movies about the Korean War to generate negative and hostile feelings against the U.S. among the Chinese public (Fifield, 2019).

Then, after the coronavirus outbreak erupted in China, U.S.-China relations increasingly deteriorated. On Feb 18, 2020, the U.S. State Department ordered five Chinese media organizations, Xinhua, China Daily, China Global Television Network, China Radio International, and People’s Daily, to register as official government entities and provide the names of their employees. The request means these Chinese news outlets will be treated as “diplomatic outposts of the Chinese government,” which means they face the same restrictions as Chinese diplomats (Fifield et al., 2020). China reacted to the State Department’s action by expelling three Beijing-based journalists who worked for *The Wall Street Journal*, because the Chinese government perceived *The Wall Street Journal’s* criticism of China’s handling of the outbreak as “racist.” The media war persisted for the

next couple of months; every time President Trump ordered reduced numbers of Chinese journalists working in the U.S., Beijing retaliated with similar measures. Journalists who worked for *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post* were expelled from China. Moreover, Beijing required these three news outlets, as well as Voice of America and *Time Magazine*, to provide the details of how they operate to the Chinese government (Tracy et al., 2020). In March, Trump's usage of "China Virus" and "Kung Flu" to address the coronavirus and indirectly blame the Chinese government for mishandling the outbreak aroused more anger from the Chinese side (Cage, 2020).

The tensions from the two sides did not ease, but got even worse in the summer of 2020 when the Trump administration ordered the closure of the Chinese consulate in Houston, citing as a reason that the Chinese diplomats in the Houston consulate were aiding economic espionage and the attempt to steal American scientific research (Wong, et. al, 2020). In retaliation, China ordered the closure of the U.S. consulate in Chengdu. In addition, the Trump administration expelled thousands of Chinese graduate students who had ties to the Chinese military schools, concerned about possible national security threats posed by international students from China (Wong & Barnes, 2020).

Furthermore, the two countries also had disputes on China's handling of situations in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. As early as the beginning of the Hong Kong protest, CCTV provided narration to explain why the protest was happening by accusing a U.S. diplomat in Hong Kong, Julie Eadeh, of fomenting the protests. They claimed that Eadeh was the one who directed "traitors" in Hong Kong to assume violent behaviors (Higgins, 2019). Their accusation provided them with a legitimate reason to pass the National Security Law,

which the Trump administration opposed by imposing economic sanctions on Hong Kong (Lau, 2020) and individual sanctions on 11 Hong Kong officials including Hong Kong chief executive Carrie Lam (Verma & Wong, 2020). The situation in Xinjiang, in which China was accused of escalating human rights abuses against the largely Muslim Uighur minority, also led the Trump administration to impose sanctions on multiple Chinese officials (Verma & Wong, 2020). China retaliated and sanctioned 28 officials in the Trump administration including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, as President Biden was sworn into office on Jan. 20, 2021 (Jiang & Westscott, 2021).

The background information regarding U.S.-China relations lays a foundation for what to expect regarding the national images that the selected U.S. and Chinese news media form of each other, as the media images of each country echo how the two countries interact with each other and the expectations they have in their relations (Dell'Orto, 2013). Anholt (2008) explained that a positive mediated national image could create a more favorable climate for international relations. However, in this case, the tense U.S.-China relations might suggest the opposite. The following chapter will review relevant literature within the scope of this project.

Chapter 2 Literature Review: Constructing International Affairs Through News Media

To explore global affairs and the realities that the Chinese and U.S. news media construct regarding the two protests specifically, constructivism—one of the major theories in international relations—might be a suitable place to start this section. Unlike realism and liberalism that emphasize power, interests and institutions, the two fundamental tenets of constructivism argue that, instead of material factors, shared ideas shape human association; rather than given by nature, shared ideas form the actors' identities and interests (Wendt, 1999). Furthermore, Adler (2013) elaborates that constructivism “describes the dynamic, contingent, and culturally based condition of the social world” (p.3).

All strands of constructivism portray the social world as “intersubjectively and collectively meaningful structures and processes” (Adler, 2013, p.9). It is composed of intersubjective interpretation, subjective knowledge and material objects (Searle, 1995). Despite individuals' possession of their own knowledge, ideas and meanings, they still think and feel in the context of intersubjective interpretation, which includes their usage of language and obedience to rules (Adler, 2013). In addition, people's actions towards objects depend on the meaning they assign to the objects (Searle, 1995). By retrieving collective knowledge of physical reality, which is constructed based on collective understanding, their agreement determines whether the social facts can be considered as facts. The collective meaning that people give constructs the structures that impact and organize people's actions (Wendt, 1992). In international politics, nations react distinctively to enemies and friends, as enemies are perceived as threats, but friends are not. How one state reacts to another's action is based on intersubjective interpretations and

expectations, based on the “distribution of knowledge,” which constructs their perception of self and other (Wendt, 1992).

As a social theory, constructivism has essential indications for interpreting knowledge, because it is closely associated with the social construction of knowledge and reality (Adler, 2013). Therefore, Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) work in the field of sociology of knowledge provides a fundamental perspective to interpret constructivism.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) define knowledge as “the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics,” and reality as “a quality appertaining to phenomena” that people realize is unconstrained of their volition as they are unable to wish it away. People learn knowledge from everyday interaction, and they perceive what they learn as reality because this knowledge constructs “the fabric of meaning.” This type of knowledge is commonsense knowledge, which plays an important role in people’s daily lives. Without it, societies would not exist (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

The knowledge and reality of everyday life have several characteristics. First, the reality of everyday life appears as being objectified, as an order of objects already identified as objects some time ago (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Moreover, the reality of everyday life is constructed by the “‘here’ of my body and the ‘now’ of my present.” People will consciously perceive what is presented “here and now” as real (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Also, the reality of everyday life is intersubjective, which means it is shared with other people. People interpret interpersonal reactions, as well as the social reality of everyday life, based on a continuum of typification (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Once people do mutual typification of habitualized movements, institutionalization occurs. The typification of habitualized movements that create institutions is shared. All members of specific social

groups have access to it. Additionally, institutions constrain human behaviors by creating pre-existing patterns of conduct.

Among these characteristics, languages play an essential role not only in objectivation, as they are used by both the producers of the objects and other members to represent the elements of the world, but also in transferring the immediate “here and now” and connecting and integrating realities of everyday life in different areas into a meaningful whole. Everyday life is life with language, which people share with their fellows (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Therefore, understanding a language is the key to grasp the reality of everyday life and construct a shared culture with others.

Communication is indispensable to having a common culture and a constant transmission of certain knowledge to people of the society (Hirsch, 1987; Wentworth, 1980). Also, it is a vital element that adds value to contemporary constructivism, as it allows actors to “fix the meanings of material reality” (Adler, 2013, p.11). Moreover, language is critical to disseminate and institutionalize ideas. Therefore, news media play an important role in providing the type of knowledge that is culturally bounded and socially constructed for their readers and audience by using commonly used and shared languages. Nearly seventy years ago, Robert Park (1955) expressed the necessity of regarding news as knowledge, but he also stressed the difficulties of distinguishing the knowledge that reporters produce from the knowledge that historians, philosophers, and scientists produce. Newsgathering is a cooperative social activity, which requires journalists to work together (Cohen, et. al, 1990). Furthermore, journalists are aware that they should inform their audience of what happens by observing and gathering information, or in Berger and Luckmann’s terms, by transferring “here and now” for their viewers. However, it is also

noteworthy that social knowledge is arranged by an effective structure of relevance and familiarities (Bernstein, 1976), which means society might take some social knowledge as important and other as meaningless. This influences journalists' decisions on what to report, or in other words, what social realities they are supposed to document.

Moving from journalists to the broader news outlets, the news media outlets should be considered as institutions, because journalists are supposed to follow rules and routines within the journalism field. For example, American journalists are expected to do accurate reporting without being biased. The institutionalized rules and procedures make knowledge production consistent (Ekström, 2002). Nevertheless, it is also noteworthy that the realities that journalists construct are influenced by capitals and rules within the journalism field.

Bourdieu-Journalism Field

Bourdieu (1998) claims that the journalistic field has “its own laws, its own nomos.” Like many other fields, the journalism field engages with two forms of capital, economic and cultural. Because the journalism field varies based on different national contexts, the capitals Bourdieu provides need to be modified. When the news is produced in an authoritarian society, political capital also plays a more vital role in impacting how realities are constructed by the news. Since this project compares the Chinese and American news coverage, the following sections will focus on addressing the journalism fields in the U.S. and China.

Journalism Field in the U.S.

In the U.S., journalists are expected to be the watchdogs of the government and work on behalf of the public. The First Amendment not only protects journalists' right to report freely, but also constrains the government from regulating the speech of the general

public or the press. This can be seen in the iconic clause —“Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press” (U.S. Const. amend. I). Therefore, journalists are supposed to hold the government accountable, as maintaining democracy has been the core of news production.

Due to these reasons, U.S. news media are non-state run. They mainly rely on circulation and advertising revenue to make money. However, like many other fields and industries, media in the U.S. are dominated by a few big companies to limit competition. At present, there are five corporations that own around 90 percent of the media (Goldin et al., 2014). Even though the arrival of the internet and social media have given everybody a platform to share their voices, big corporations such as Apple, Facebook, and Google are still the major gatekeepers of information (Hindman, 2018). Nevertheless, the rise of the internet and social media lead newspapers and TV news stations to make a decreasing amount of profit, as their circulation rate has continuously dropped over the last two decades causing the profit they make from advertising to shrink.

The shrinking budgets produce a negative impact on international news reporting. Most news outlets have to cut down not only the numbers of their journalists, but also their foreign bureaus in an era when we need more foreign news. The work is, therefore, made up of citizen journalists, parachute journalists and freelancers.

Journalism Field in China

The journalism field in China is quite different from the journalism field in the U.S. Even though the two forms of capital, economic and cultural, that Bourdieu discusses still matter in the Chinese journalism field, the political forces should also be taken into consideration. According to the Norms of Professional Ethics for Chinese Journalists

(2015), the first rule that the Chinese journalists need to obey is being loyal to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), as the Chinese government believes that being loyal to the CCP is the same as being loyal to the Chinese public. Therefore, the majority of news media in China is state-run. Nevertheless, it is also noteworthy that the Chinese news media are also supposed to produce content that the Chinese public is interested in, as the state-run news media need to compete with a skyrocketing number of sensational and entertaining tabloids for advertising revenues. Although the state-run news media are trying to attract a more general public, they are still the mouthpieces of the Chinese government and they meet the CCP's propaganda needs. Zhao (1998, p.161) explained that Chinese state-run news media "establish a common ground between the Party and the people" by reporting topics that the public is interested in.

However, this common ground has only been found since the second Chairman Deng decided to open and reform China in the late 1970s. The "opening-up" of the Chinese state-run news media not only made news content that people read to be different, but also started to make journalism practice different. For example, before the opening up, Chu (1978) found that no national or international news about crime or disasters was produced in 1977 by Peking Television, as China Central Television (CCTV) was formerly known. A practical explanation for the absence is that crime and disaster stories are negative in nature, which might undermine the Chinese authority narrative of a "clean and superior Communist society" (Chang, 1994). In comparison, in 1992, as the media outlets opened up, they started to tell of a more objective reality. However, the state-run Chinese media's coverage of the Chinese government as overwhelmingly positive.

In the 2000s, after the SARS outbreak, the Chinese government realized that to govern the country effectively and to build a positive image of the government in people's minds, they needed to be more transparent with the public. Therefore, Chinese journalism embraced more Western journalism practices by sending Chinese journalists to American journalism schools and inviting American journalists to hold workshops in China (Luther & Zhou, 2005). However, while a number of Chinese journalists treat the Western news media as ideal and adopt Western journalism practices, some still believe that the role of the state-run news media is interpreting the central government's policies (Pan & Chan, 2003). Furthermore, in Zhang's study on how Chinese foreign correspondents do their reporting, one of the interviewees mentioned that they always keep the tone of their story in line with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. Their first goal is making no mistakes, then they can develop their stories (Zhang & Zhang, 2017).

In addition, Chinese news media have been trying to increase their international influence since 2000. The Chinese government spent seven billion dollars to let the world know of the existence of Chinese media (Huang & Wang, 2020). While international news outlets are limiting and cutting the number of their overseas bureaus, Chinese news media are spending more money to open overseas bureaus.

Nonetheless, under President Xi Jinping, the media environment in China is tightening (Svensson, 2017). Publishing news articles on one of the most popular Chinese social media platforms, WeChat, requires special permission. Investigative journalism is under threat. Since 2013, a large number of investigative reporters have left their jobs (Svensson, 2017). The risks for investigative journalists who decide to keep doing their jobs ranges from being blocked from publishing their works by social media platforms and

news outlets to being harassed and detained by authorities. Under Mr. Xi, his strongman politics have led to almost complete depletion of critical reporting in the Chinese press (Hernandez, 2019).

The above literature clearly demonstrates the many differences between the U.S. and the Chinese journalism fields regarding governmental control, marketing, and journalistic practices. These differences are taken into consideration while the U.S. and Chinese news media construct divergent discourses about the HK and BLM protests. For instance, if the selected Chinese new media cast China's domestic political leaders in a positive light, but the chosen U.S. news media depicted American political officials negatively, the state-run feature of the Chinese journalism field and the independent and watchdog feature of the U.S. journalism field will be taken into account respectively.

Although the contrasting journalism fields in China and the U.S. might contribute to the fact that news media in the two countries construct distinct realities about the two protests, national identity—another key element within constructivism—should also be taken into account.

National Identity and News Coverage

Wendt (1999) argues that identity is constructed both internally and externally. The internal identity is formed based on actors' self-understandings; the external one depends on the relation to others. As Peter Berger explains (1966, p.111), "identity, with its appropriate attachments of psychological reality, is always identity within a specific, socially constructed world." The status of identity is ever changing and in process (Wodak et al., 2009). When it comes to national identity specially, Wodak et al. (1999) illustrated that, by using narratives of national culture, discourse plays a vital role in constructing

national identity. With reference to Stuart Hall's five discursive strategies of national cultural narrations, Wodak et al. (1999, p.24) demonstrate that media, literature, and everyday culture stories connect historical events, national symbols and national rituals that represent shared experiences and concerns, triumphs and destructive defeats, which in turn tie everyday life to a "national destiny." Their point was reinforced by Altheide (2004). He claimed that schools, churches, mass media, and other institutions contribute to constituting national identity by creating and using symbols and labels that clearly distinguish who are in-group members and who are not.

The interpretation of national identity requires the existence of a divergent "Other" (Carter, et al., 2011), and international news media often help establish boundaries between "Us" and "Them." From the European Union (EU) to China, news media across the globe distinguish "Us" and "Them" in various coverage. As a case in point, Olausson (2010) found that when a Swedish news tabloid and a public service broadcaster cover the topic of climate change, the European identity is constructed by portraying that it has a conflictual relationship with the U.S. The EU – represented as "Us" and also "the good guys" – admitted the seriousness of climate change and intended to respond to this challenge. However, the U.S.—"them" and also the "evil guys"—declines to even talk about solutions to climate change. Moreover, the Swedish news media's usage of military vocabulary such as "battle to confront the threats to the arctic ecosystem" further emphasizes the opposite position between the U.S. and EU, "Them" and "U.S.," over the topic of climate change (Olausson, 2010). The news media in the EU are not the only ones that portray the U.S. as "Them." The U.S. has been defined as "Them" when the Chinese news media reported the territorial dispute between China and Japan (Chan, 2013). The

Chinese news media need to emphasize the Communist Party's foreign policy, which focuses on increasing its collaboration with other countries economically and reassuring other Asian countries that the rise of the Chinese economy is friendly and non-threatening. Thus, when the Chinese news media cover China and Japan's dispute on Senkaku Island, they portray the U.S. as "Them," as going against the common interest of China and Japan. Simultaneously, they also underscore that Japan and China are "Asian countries" and indicate that Japan is a part of "Us" (Chan, 2013).

Othering also happens in U.S. news media. During the May 2006 immigration policy debate, a study found that the physical borderline impacted how *The New York Times* defined the identities of Mexican and Americans (Carter et al., 2010). Some of its reports used "undocumented immigrants" or "undocumented workers" to portray the border crossers, which emphasizes the crossers' peaceful and productive intentions. However, some reports used "illegal immigrants" or "illegal aliens" and quoted then President Bush's words—"Our country is a country of laws, and we've got to enforce our laws"—while covering the border crossers. In these reports, U.S. identity was constructed as a nation of law-abiding citizens (Carter et al., 2010). Even the news coverage of the Olympic opening ceremony can help construct national identity. In 2012, newspapers constructed British identity by highlighting the "great" in Great Britain (Thomas & Antony, 2015). For instance, one *Sunday Mirror's* editorial said that "If ever there was any doubt, the opening of the London Olympics confirmed that this is still very much GREAT Britain" (Thomas & Antony, 2015).

Despite the fact that news media make clear distinctions between "Us" and "Them" while reporting on other nations, "Our" news media simultaneously talk about "Us" by

defining “Our” interests and making reference to “Our” country. This can be seen in both Washburn’s (2002) analysis of news discourse on the Falklands War and the Iraq War, and Dell’Orto’s (2013) analysis of news discourse on the revolutions across Europe in 1848. In their news reports, foreign correspondents in the 1840s talked more about the U.S. than Europe while covering the revolutions, showing that news media construct discourse of foreign realities by forming a generalized “other,” going along with a discourse of self (Dell’Orto, 2013).

Furthermore, identities are the foundation of interests, which, as Wendt (1992) explained, are defined “in the process of defining situations” (p.397). Wendt (1999) argues that other than the three national interests—physical survival, autonomy, and economic well-being—that George and Keohane previously identified, “collective self-esteem” should also be taken into account. In international news reporting, the collective self-esteem seems to impact journalists’ coverage significantly. Multiple studies found that journalists tend to cast a more positive light on their own countries and countries that share geographic and linguistic similarities with their countries. For example, when the story about the U.S. military’s treatment of Abu Ghraib prisoners was covered by news media in Australia, Britain, Canada, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United States, the news media in the U.S. rarely used the word “torture” to portray the situation (Jones & Sheets, 2009). The picture that the U.S. news media formed of the U.S. military is less scathing. Furthermore, journalists in English-speaking countries were also less likely to define the Abu Ghraib situation as torture. In contrast, non-English speaking countries such as Germany, Italy and Spain were more critical about the U.S. military actions at Abu Ghraib (Jones & Sheets, 2009).

The *International Herald Tribune* (IHT)'s coverage of "Us" (the United States) and "Them" is also influenced by national identities. Goss (2015) found that the IHT portrays the U.S. as "orderly, harmonious, and steeped in democratic mystique" (p.243). In contrast, "They" are framed as places that frequently suffer from a lack of unity and all different types of illiberalism such as Statism, corruption, and mayhem. This narrative is more commonly seen when the IHT covers Russia and China (Goss, 2015).

Rivenburgh (2000) examines newspapers from three countries, the U.S., Argentina, and Denmark. Her research shows a similar result. She concludes that all three newspapers tend to portray their own country positively. Moreover, despite the negative activities their home country did, the newspapers are likely to protect their national identities. When journalists encounter political violence such as war or terrorism, the following question becomes: Is this "their event" or "our event"? (Nossek, 2004). If the event is defined as "ours," journalists' national identity will precede journalistic norms. In contrast, if the event is defined as "theirs," journalistic norms will precede journalists' national identity (Nossek, 2004). National identity also plays a role in people's perception of the Third Person Effect, which is that people are more likely to perceive that mass media produce more effects on others than on themselves. Muller (2013) suggests that news media present that media have a smaller effect on their own countries and a stronger effect on "other countries."

The above literature indicates that news media play an important role in constituting national identities by setting boundaries between "Them" and "Us." Because this study explores the constructed realities regarding the HK and BLM protests specifically, the following paragraphs will explore how national identities impact news coverage of protests.

National Identity and News Coverage of Protests

Shahin et al. (2016) summarize that there are three main types of research that examines the news coverage of international protests: (1) transnational research, which studies the foreign news coverage of a protest; (2) comparative research that examines both the domestic and international news coverage of a protest; (3) idiographic research that looks into domestic news coverage of a local protest. Furthermore, researchers have identified recurrent components that news media use to cover protests, and these components construct a protest paradigm (Chan and Lee, 1984). The protest paradigm contains five components: (1) the use of news frames to emphasize certain issues over others (Entman, 1993) – the common news frames used in covering protests include the riot frames, which highlight the destruction, lawlessness and disorders due to the protest, and crime story frames, which portray the crime events that are committed by certain members of a protest group; (2) reliance on official sources and official definitions; (3) the invocation of public opinion, which means journalists give voice to the general public who usually have a shallow understanding of why the movements took place; (4) delegitimization, which means news coverage fails to provide enough reasons to explain why the protest took place (then, the coverage of the protests is only about the actions rather than the reasons that lead to the protests); and (5) demonization, which means protesters are covered episodically. Moreover, the news coverage focuses on reporting destruction and protesters' confrontation with police and arrest (Leopold & Bell, 2017). Even though some studies have suggested a modification of the paradigm, such as considering how the protesters' tactics and goals impact the news coverage (e.g. Boyle et

al., 2012), the protest paradigm provides this project a basic framework to analyze the news articles regarding the recent HK and BLM protests.

Harlow et al.'s (2020) study provides an overview of how international news media on social media cover protests across the globe. They found that whether the news media will have a debate frame or a confrontation frame to portray the protests depends on where the protests take place. For example, coverage of protests in Europe is more likely to use a debate frame, which includes social critique of the movements and the protesters' demand and points of view, rather than a confrontation frame, which emphasizes the confrontation between the police and the protesters. Furthermore, where the news media are located also influences the frame they use. News media in Latin America and Asia had increased the possibilities to frame the protests as a spectacle. Latin American news media also had increased the possibilities to frame the protests as a debate (Harlow et al., 2020).

Moving from the overview, several studies indicate that, compared with covering domestic protests, news media tend to portray the protests that took place in other countries as legitimate. Kilgo et al. (2018)'s research compares U.S. news coverage circulating on Facebook and Twitter of a domestic BLM protest and a Mexican protest. They suggest that the Mexican protests are more legitimately portrayed than the domestic BLM protest, as the news media more frequently frame it as a spectacle. However, when reporting on the domestic protest, news articles are more likely to use confrontation frames (Kilgo et al., 2018). Their findings are reaffirmed by Leopold and Bell (2017), who examine how the BLM protest in 2014 was covered by seven U.S. newspapers. They concluded that the coverage of the BLM protest sticks to the protest paradigm – the newspapers not only portray the protest as lawless, violent and criminal, but also mainly give voice to the general

public and official sources, and provide little background information on what led to the protest.

Beyond news media in the U.S., studies of Brazilian, Indian and Chinese news coverage of protests that took place in their countries provide a somewhat similar but also different result. Shahin et al. (2016) indicate that news media in India are less likely to follow the protest paradigm while covering domestic protests. In contrast, the Brazilian and Chinese news media moderately follow the protest paradigm while covering their local protests. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the right-leaning Hong Kong-based newspaper *Wen Wei Po* is much more likely to follow the protest paradigm than the left-leaning newspaper *Apple Daily*. In addition, it is important to note that some essential elements of the protest paradigm, such as the sources that journalists give voice to, violence blame and reference to protesters' causes, can also be commonly seen in news coverage of these three countries (Shahin et al., 2016).

When it comes to how foreign news media cover protests, international relations with the country where the protests take place significantly affect how international news media cover the protests. Wittebols' (1996) study of how U.S. and Canadian TV news cover social protest suggests that the protesters in countries that have a hostile relationship with the U.S. receive more positive coverage. Those protesters are generally portrayed as brave people who fight for democracy. Protesters' violent behaviors are deemphasized. In comparison, for protesters in countries that the U.S. has a good relationship with or who protest against the U.S., their violent actions are emphasized and their demands are ignored. The similar patterns can be seen using the state-run Chinese news coverage of protests as well. Fang (1994) found that, when protests took place in countries like South Africa and

Israel, which China has a hostile relationship with, *The People's Daily* used words such as “protests” and “demonstrations” to describe the situations. In addition, it put the police at the sentence’s subject position to emphasize their violent actions against the protesters. In contrast, when reporting protests that take place in countries that have a friendly relationship with China, *The People's Daily* uses words such as “unrest” to portray the situation. Also, even though it also reports on the protesters’ injuries, the sentences that describe the situations use passive voice, which omit the fact that police lead to the protesters’ injuries (Fang, 1994).

Lee and Yang (1994)’s analysis of how the U.S. and Japanese news media covered the Tiananmen Square protest provides a more specific example of how national interests impact news coverage. They found that *The Associated Press (AP)* was more likely to emphasize the Chinese protesters’ demand for democracy and freedom. In comparison, Kyodo was more likely to focus on following the protest’s daily development. Similarly, the AP was more likely than Kyodo to quote the protesters and highlight the Chinese government’s harsh treatment of protesters. The differences between the U.S. and Japanese news coverage reflect their divergent national interests in China. The U.S. in the late 1980s was trying to win an ideological war, but Japan was concerned about economic gains and unwilling to challenge the Chinese authorities (Lee & Yang, 1994).

Apart from international interests, the political ideology of newspapers also determines how international protests are covered. Kim and Shahin (2019) compare the U.S. and Korean news coverage of the 2017 candlelight protest in South Korea. They found that liberal news media *The New York Times* and *Kyunghyang Shinmun* supported the protest and mainly got their information from the protesters. Differently, conservative

newspapers *The Wall Street Journal* and *Chosun Ilbo*, were protective of Park, the former South Korean president, and her supporters (Kim & Shahin, 2019).

These studies lay out diverse results of how national identities, national interests, international relations and newspaper ideologies affect news coverage of protests in “my” country and protests in “their” countries. To further understand how national identity impacts the realities that U.S. and Chinese news media construct regarding the HK protest and the BLM protest, previous studies that compared Chinese and Western news coverage of protests shed light on this project.

Chen (2012) examines how the Chinese and U.S. news media covered the Tiananmen Square protests, and how the protests were memorized by the news media in the two countries in the digital era. She concludes that *The New York Times* memorized the protest as a mainly peaceful protest that demanded democracy and freedom, which was brutally cracked down by the Chinese government. Divergently, the Chinese news media *Xinhua* remembered the protest as a “counter-revolutionary rebellion instigated by a few ringleaders bent on causing internal turmoil and to overthrow the government” (Chen, 2012, p.152). Veneti et al. (2016) found a similar result while comparing *China Daily*’s and *The Guardian*’s coverage of the HK protest in 2014. Their study shows that *China Daily* portrays the protest as illegal. It overly emphasizes the general public’s dissatisfaction and cites negative commentary that resonates with Beijing’s views, which ultimately functions to delegitimize the protests. Moreover, the news coverage also demonizes the U.S. government, by stressing the United States’ involvement in social movements in the Middle East and Ukraine. On the other hand, *The Guardian* shows its skepticism towards Beijing’s policy. Furthermore, it not only quotes a variety of official sources, but also gives

voice to the protesters, shows their demands and tries to avoid direct attack against the protesters (Veneti et al., 2016).

In sum, previous research that studies how national identity influences news coverage of protests mainly examines the coverage from one country's perspective (e.g. Kilgo et al., 2018) or compares how news media in different countries cover their domestic protests (Shahin, 2016). Moreover, comparative research is also predominantly focused on examining protests in one country (e.g. Chen, 2012; Kim & Shahin, 2019; Veneti et al., 2016). Therefore, there is a lack of research that gives a holistic view of how national identities shape news coverage. I attempt to offer this holistic view by asking:

- RQ1: How do selected U.S. and Chinese news media construct discourses about domestic protests differently or similarly to their discourses about foreign protests?

When the chosen U.S. and Chinese news media constructed discourses of international protests, they also automatically constituted the national images of the countries where the protests took place. Nevertheless, public diplomacy, another critical factor in shaping the formation of a country's national image should also be considered. The following section explores the relations between international news coverage, national images, and public diplomacy.

National Images, Public Diplomacy and News Coverage

Luther (1999) argues that national identity plays the most prominent role in forming “press-conveyed images of nations” (p.3); the national images that states form of one another via mass media reflect how they interact with one another and what ensuing expectations they have in their relations (Dell’Orto, 2013). As U.S.—China relations deteriorate, it is necessary to examine what images the U.S. and Chinese news media

construct of the respective other country to learn how they interact with each other and what they expect from their relations.

Public diplomacy plays a key role in impacting the national image that foreign nations form. Nicholas Cull (2009, p.12) explains that public diplomacy is “an international actor’s attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public.” It is an approach to promote a country’s soft power—the capability of impacting others to get the results one desires through attraction instead of coercion or payment (Nye, 2008). It matters because a good power strategy contains both hard and soft power (Nye, 2008). Also, an improved national image could create a more favorable place for tourism, international trade, the international job market, and international relations (Anholt, 2008). Cull (2019) suggests five strategies which are commonly used in public diplomacy: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchanges and international broadcasting. Among these five strategies, international broadcasting or mass communication provides nations a convenient way to promote their national images and certain foreign policies among crowds beyond their national borders, which Entman (2008) defines as mediated public diplomacy.

Countries across the globe have employed a diverse strategy to promote mediated public diplomacy. As early as the 1920s, the invention of radio brought many states to start broadcasting in foreign languages (Nye, 2008). The international broadcasting of the BBC World Service has been an icon of British public diplomacy for decades (Cull, 2009). In the U.S., Voice of America (VOA) developed quickly during World War II. Following the model of the BBC, it owned 23 transmitters and delivered news in 27 languages as of 1943 (Nye, 2008). Other than international broadcasting, some countries also chose to sign

contracts with other countries' public relations agencies. As a case in point, South Korea, Philippines, Yugoslavia, Argentina, Indonesia, and 20 other countries signed contracts with American public relations companies in order to improve their national images in U.S. news media during the 1970s (Manheim & Albritton, 1984). Furthermore, some countries choose to hold global news media events such as U.N. summit meetings to improve their national images (Giffard & Rivenburgh, 2000).

The digital era also has changed the ways countries promote national images as the boundary between international and domestic information becomes increasingly blurry (Vickers, 2004). Since the information age, the U.K., for instance, has tried to rebrand itself by highlighting its music, arts, fashion, business, sport, technology and "street culture to attract a young, technologically minded crowd overseas and established think tanks." Canada has increased its open dialogue with NGOs, scholars, and journalists, and invited citizen groups to play a role in global affairs (Vickers, 2004). The U.S., VOA specifically, has launched a short video program on a Chinese social media platform to introduce modern slang terms (Cull, 2019). Beyond Western countries, Iran launched its English program, Press TV, in 2007, which it claims offers a different perspective that CNN, BBC or Al-Jazeera English turned a blind eye to (Wastnidge, 2015).

The occurrence of a large-scale domestic protest often requires a country to seek to improve its national image abroad. In the mid-1950s, the proliferation of the civil rights movement in the U.S. gave the Soviet Union a chance to accuse the U.S. of being a double-standard country that only protected the democratic rights for whites and brutally withheld those rights from Blacks (Davenport, 2009). Furthermore, the propaganda of the Soviet Union characterized Americans as racists and segregationists. The world also growingly

probed the American image as a state struggling to reconsider its racial and cultural identity. Racial discrimination in the U.S. undermined its capability to counter the Soviet Union in the Cold War (Davenport, 2009). So, to improve its national image, prevent newly decolonized and independent Asian and African countries from going to the Soviet side, and ultimately confront the Soviet Union, the U.S. finally started to accept Black cultural products, particularly jazz, utilized them in cultural tours, and launched a show, “Music USA,” which featured jazz on VOA (Davenport, 2009; NPR, 2018). Consequently, jazz diplomacy in the 1950s helped alter the national image of the U.S. globally (Davenport, 2009).

Both the Tiananmen Square protest in 1989 and the Yellow Umbrella protest, also about Hong Kong rights, in 2014, negatively influenced the national image of China abroad. To improve its global impression after the Tiananmen crackdown, the Chinese government tried to hold multiple global news events, such as applying to host the 2000 Olympic Games (Giffard & Rivenburgh, 2000). The Yellow Umbrella protest led Chinese news media to promote the national image of China by portraying it as a victim, a “reasonable” power and a kind and open-minded leader in the China-Hong Kong relations (Loh, 2016). Furthermore, its coverage greatly influenced how other Chinese-speaking areas such as Taiwan and Singapore covered the movement (Zhang, et. al, 2018).

Nevertheless, despite the big efforts that countries have made on improving their national images, not all produce the desired effect. Zhang’s (2012) research sets a base to understand what methods to improve the national image might be effective. Zhang looks into how media salience, public opinion and political agendas impact American people’s perception of foreign nations. She found that the more frequently news media cover one

country, the more people perceive the country as important. Furthermore, if a country is negatively portrayed by the news media and the presidential public papers, the public will also view the country negatively (Zhang, 2012). Her study provides a possible explanation to why signing contracts with overseas public relations agencies might be the most effective way to improve the country's national image.

Manheim and Albritton (1984) examine the images that *The New York Times* formed of South Korea, Philippines, Yugoslavia, Argentina, Indonesia, and Rhodesia, all of whom signed on with a public relations agency in the U.S. during 1974–1978 to improve their national images in the American press. In addition, they chose to compare the result with the image that *The New York Times* constructed of Mexico, which refused to sign the service. Their result indicates that the public relations agencies did help all of the six countries' national images in *The New York Times* get better, but not for the image of Mexico. Their finding was reaffirmed by Lee and Hong (2012). They suggest public relations companies affect public perceptions of the countries that sign contracts with them directly, as constructive news coverage leads people to perceive the country positively (Lee & Hong, 2012).

Holding global news events such as U.N. summit meetings can also improve one country's national image, but it is only limited to developed countries. Giffard and Rivenburgh (2000) examine Associated Press, Reuters and Inter Press Service's coverage of six U.N. summit meetings and their portrayal of the host countries. They illustrate that Western host countries receive more positive coverage than developing host countries, and any host country receives more profile coverage than participant countries. The theme of U.N. summits also impacts how the hosting countries are covered.

From the target country's side, a country's political culture and the pre-existing attitude of individual media consumers also influence how effective the public diplomacy strategy is. Yarchi et al. (2012) look into how news media in the U.S., U.K., Israel and India cover terrorism that took place in countries that want to improve their foreign national images, and to what extent the U.S., U.K., Israel and India use these countries' promoted news frames. They concluded that when two countries share similar political values, the news media of the target countries are more likely to use the promoting news frame. Moreover, when the countries are also dealing with terror events, the news media in target countries will use similar frames to the promoted news frame. Furthermore, individual pre-existing positions also impact the effectiveness of public diplomacy strategies. The U.S. has sponsored an Arab news outlet, *al-Hurra*, to enhance its image in Arab countries. Fahmy et al. (2012) surveyed online consumers on Arab news websites regarding their consumption and trust in three news media, *al-Jazeera*, *al-Arabiya*, and *al-Hurra*. They found that people who generally support U.S. policies are more likely to consume *al-Hurra*. In turn, people with anti-US sentiment are less likely to consume *al-Hurra*. And their exposure habits also indicate their trust in the media they consume.

Therefore, there are differences between the image that one's own country promotes and the image in the minds of the target countries' public. News media play an essential role in constructing the images of other countries. This project mainly concerns how the U.S. and Chinese news media construct images of each other at times of domestic crisis and in the larger context of worsening international relations.

Since the 1980s, China has projected its national image as a peace-loving nation, a cooperator that is an antihegemonic force and becoming a major world power (Wang,

2011). However, the image it projects is not identical to the image that the U.S. news media has constructed. The normalization of the U.S.-China relationship in 1979 allowed U.S. journalists to report China on the Chinese ground (Dell'Orto, 2013). The images of China that the U.S. foreign correspondents formed in the late 1970s were still stereotypical, as the coverage contained "a sense of Western superiority and anti-communism," and American journalists only perceived the country as having big economic potential. Nevertheless, journalists also tried to share with their audience what daily life looked like in China. The vital major topics they covered in the late 1970s included a society with freedom in economy but not in civil rights, a complicated ambivalence about American ideas and "a giant business venture" (Dell'Orto, 2013, p.139).

In the early 1980s, the news articles still welcomed the enhancement of U.S.-China relations, and their coverage about China was significantly influenced by the presidential initiative, but was more factual than judgmental (Chang, 1993). In the late 1980s, Americans saw China's reform and opening up as a victory of capitalism. In addition, the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989 affirmed the totalitarian perception of a communist country (Womack, 1990). In the 1990s, the Tiananmen Square crackdown led the U.S. news media to use negative discourses about human rights issues in China (Lee, 2002). Moreover, this negative discourse was used for a long time until former President Clinton's visit to China in 1998. The recovery of the U.S. and China's business relationship caused the news media to generate a relatively positive image of China (Wang & Shoemaker, 2011). Since then, China has not only been portrayed as a rising power, but a threat (Yang & Liu, 2012).

In the 21st century, the hosting of the Beijing Olympics did not change the image of China in the U.S. news media to be positive. Yadan Zhang (2015) analyzes the news frame that *The New York Times* used to construct the image of China from 2005 to 2012, pre-Beijing Olympic Games to post-Beijing Olympic Games. She found that *The New York Times* defined China as “irresponsible trade partner” and “human rights violator” before it hosted the Games. Then, during the Games, *The Times* portrayed it as an authoritarian country and doubted its qualification of hosting the Olympics. After the Games, “irresponsible trade partner” and “human rights violator” reappeared in *The Times*’ coverage. Reeves (2016) provides a more holistic analysis of how U.S. news media—*The News York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today* and *Washington Free Beacon* (*Fox News*)—constructed China in 2014-2015. He found that negative coverage of China’s political system and Communist Party is commonly seen across all five news media. Case in point, *The New York Times* reported intensively on the Chinese government’s corruption and the motivation of Xi’s administration to crack down on corruption. Furthermore, *The Washington Post* spent a lot of effort on reporting the CCP’s oppression of Chinese ethnic groups and its action to control domestic and Western news reporting on China.

On the other side, the images of the U.S. that the state-run Chinese news media construct are also not positive. During 1979-1980, one third of *The People’s Daily*’s coverage of the U.S. was about its domestic issues such as social and economic mismanagement (Lee, 1981). Nonetheless, its coverage of the U.S.’ technology advancement increased significantly during 1979-1980 (Lee, 1981). In the early 1990s, *The Daily*’s coverage got a bit more positive. It described the U.S. as not alone in having

economic problems, because they are one of the issues of the capitalist system. However, it still did not turn a blind eye to the dark sides of U.S. society. T.K. Chang (1994) argues that the tones that the newspaper used indicated a mixed knowledge of the U.S. In addition, in the 1990s, the profile of the U.S. was magnified by China Central Television (CCTV), as 26.5 percent of its coverage of the U.S. also emphasized American advanced technologies. Furthermore, CCTV was more likely to report the disasters and accidents in the U.S. such as police killings, riots and earthquakes. Compared with other most reported countries like Japan or Russia, CCTV did not report any disasters or social unrest in these countries, but had multiple stories about disasters and accidents in the U.S. The video footage CCTV broadcasted helped it portray U.S. society as turbulent and violent (Chang, 1994).

He et al.'s (2012) study shows the images of the U.S. that the Chinese news media formed in the 2000s. They examined five state-run Chinese news media's coverage of the U.S. and demonstrated that the political images of the U.S. that the Chinese news media formed contain contradictory attributes: positive and negative, powerful but aggressive, democratic but sanctimonious. The economic image was formed by portraying the U.S. as a country which was experiencing recession, but would recuperate. The social image highlights "fair play with minor skirmishes," as the news media were focusing on reporting personality profiles and human-interest stories and racial relations. The cultural image was constructed as "diverse, free, democratic, advanced in science and technology, but hegemonic and biased" (He, et. al, 2012, p.676).

In the 2010s, the American image in Chinese news media can be seen through Chinese people's perception of the U.S. People who consumed traditional news media in

China would likely view the U.S. media as not portraying China accurately. People who consumed news from new media platforms would view the U.S. as an essential partner to China (Fung et al., 2018). However, the highlighting of American technology advancement by Chinese news media lead some Chinese people to perceive the U.S. based on conspiracy theories and regard it as an antagonist (Fan, 2016). For example, some believe that the U.S. made SARS and bird flu as biological weapons to destabilize China (Fan, 2016). Recently, some – including even a Chinese diplomat – believed and promoted the conspiracy theory that the COVID virus was developed by a U.S. biological lab and sent to China by the U.S. Army (Westscott & Jiang, 2020).

Building on the existing images that U.S. and Chinese news media have formed of each other, this project intends to further explore the images that selected U.S. and Chinese news media try to constitute of each other in the third decade of 21st century, as the U.S.-China relation went sour again. Thus, this project asks the second research question:

- RQ2: What national images did U.S. and Chinese news media construct of each other in their coverage of the HK and BLM protests?

Chapter 3 Methodology

This project uses discourse analysis as the research method to explore how national identities, national interests and international relations are reflected in the selected U.S. and Chinese news coverage of the HK and the BLM protests. More specifically, it examines how the chosen U.S. and Chinese news media construct discourses about domestic protests differently or similarly to how they constitute discourse about protests that took place in the opposing country. Furthermore, this project explores the national images that the U.S. and Chinese news media constitute of each other in their coverage of the two protests.

Charlotte Epstein (2008) defines a discourse as “a cohesive ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations about a specific object that frame that object in a certain way and, therefore, delimit the possibilities for action in relation to it” (p. 2). Discourses not only construct a “space of object” by presenting realities meaningfully to us in exceptional ways, but also form the identities of social actors by establishing unique subject-positions (Epstein, 2008, p.6). In Fairclough’s (1995) words, any texts—parallel to discourses if they are meaningful and produce effects in the real world (Mills, 2004)—constitute social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and beliefs. Through discourses, nations, societies and individuals are able to make sense of themselves, others and the outside world (Epstein, 2008). The study of discourse is an important method to observe what discourses do, as it allows us to take a step out of what the discourses are saying (Epstein, 2008).

Within discourses, discursive structures play a key role in how we make sense of the texts (Mills, 2004). Mills (2004) called the discursive structures the “web of practices.”

They are the features and the more abstract components within a specific discourse. The study of discourse is not just analyzing texts, but the structures and rules of discourse (Mills, 2004). Furthermore, as discourses create meanings, they also simultaneously generate and distribute social power. Mills (2004) summarizes Foucault's analysis of power as it "is dispersed throughout social relations, that it produces possible forms of [behavior] as well as restricting [behavior]." Power and meaning are intrinsically interwoven in both the studies of international politics (Epstein, 2008) and news media (Fairclough, 1995). News media as one of the major meaning-making institutions generate the production of power. Van Dijk (1991, p.110) explained that "most of our social and political knowledge and beliefs about the world derive from the dozens of news reports we read or see every day." News media help their audience make sense of different events, issues and the world around them by drawing on the available discourses. The discourse analyses of any text, which certainly includes news articles, "connect the analysis of language with fundamental concerns of social analysis: questions of knowledge, belief and ideology..., questions of social relationships and power, and questions of identity" (Fairclough, 1995, p.17).

In this case specifically, the state-run Chinese news media play a more indispensable role in generating the production of power. As argued by T.K. Chang et al. (1994, p.66), the knowledge that the highly state-run Chinese news media CCTV and *The People's Daily* provide is based on a mix of objective realities and "China's own practical and social commitments." They function as "a major stock of social knowledge" for the Chinese public to make sense of the outside world, which in turn constructs a forced consensus that serves as "the basis of Communist rule and legitimacy" (Chang et al., 1994,

p.52). Even though user-generated content on social media platforms somewhat intervenes in traditional news media's production of power, as all individuals have a platform to share their voices and select where they can get their information from, legacy news media still direct and dominate the information environment in both Western countries and China (Djerf-Pierre & Shehata, 2017; Zhang, 2021). Thus, the traditional news media are still one of the crucial meaning-making institutions that generate the production of power.

I carry out a discourse analysis of the U.S. and Chinese news coverage of HK and BLM protests by modifying the three-step approach proposed by Norman Fairclough (1995). The three components of the analysis include the examination of texts, discursive practice (the procedure of text production and consumption), and sociocultural practice (the involvement of situational, institutional, social and cultural context), and the relationships between these three elements. Drawing from Dell'Orto's (2013) modification of Fairclough's approach, the main focus of this project is media texts, i.e. analyzing terms and themes in the U.S. and Chinese news coverage of the HK and BLM protests. Discursive and sociocultural practices are examined by using existing literature.

The analysis of the news discourses of the protests still follows Dell'Orto's (2013) adaptation of Fairclough's method. It first aims to identify the main themes, as suggested by van Dijk (1991), implicit or explicit, and prevailing language usages such as word choices, metaphors, descriptions and word images in the chosen news articles. In addition, the analysis of media texts is also guided by an adjustment of the three questions Fairclough (1995) proposed to analyze how media texts show representations, identities, and relations. The three overarching questions that will be explored in the analysis of the media texts

about the HK and BLM protests are: how are the two protests and two countries represented by the selected U.S. and Chinese news media? How do the chosen U.S. and Chinese news media construct the identities of the protesters? How do the selected U.S. and Chinese news media set up the relationships between police, protesters, local business owners, general public and government officials?

Second, the analysis intends to identify intertextuality. Fairclough (1995) defined intertextuality as “an interpretation which locates the text in relation to social repertoires of discourse practices” (p.61). In other words, it is taken-for-granted knowledge in a particular culture that was embodied in the analysis of texts (Dell’Orto, 2013). It is a bridge that connects the texts and discourse practices and modifies within them (Fairclough, 1995). In addition, it includes prepositions and implicit assumptions making reference to ways things are discussed in a specific culture (Dell’Orto, 2013), as “traces of the discourse practice in the text” (Fairclough, 1995, p.61).

In news reporting, it is common to use taken-for-granted knowledge and prepositions without further and detailed explanation. However, it does not signify that prepositions are meaningless. In fact, “[w]ords, clauses, and other textual expressions may imply concepts or propositions which may be inferred on the basis of background knowledge” (van Dijk, 1991, p. 114). The analysis of representation in discourse analysis, as Fairclough (1995, p.106) suggests, mainly focuses on what is “there” in the text. Nonetheless, it is also essential to pay attention to what is absent from the text, as the study of “unsaid” sometimes can disclose more than the analysis of what is in the text (van Dijk,

1991). Therefore, this project's analysis of media texts will be mindful of the implicit and "unsaid" in news coverage of the HK and BLM protests.

To analyze the news discourse of the U.S. and Chinese coverage of the HK and BLM protests, I chose two U.S. newspapers, *The New York Times* (NYT) and *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ), and two Chinese news outlets, *The Global Times* (GT) and *Pengpai*. I chose *The NYT* and *The WSJ* because they are two of the most reputable U.S. newspapers: *The WSJ* has one of the largest circulations in the U.S., and *The NYT* sets other news media's agenda of what to cover (Dearing and Roger, 1996). When it comes to the differences between the two, *The NYT* holds a liberal point of view as opposed to the conservative *WSJ* (ad fontes media, 2020).

For the Chinese news media, I selected *The GT* because it is a part of the legacy Chinese state-run newspaper, *The People's Daily* (PD), which not only claims to be the mouth-piece of the Chinese government, but also the provider of "the stock of social knowledge" for the Chinese public (Chang, 1994). In addition, compared with other legacy state-run Chinese news media such as *Xinhua* and *The PD*, *The GT* not only has a comparable readership to the legacy news media—nearly 300 million followers on Weibo—but also mainly focuses on covering global affairs instead of mainland China, which makes it a suitable choice to represent how state-run Chinese news media cover the two protests, as both of the protests took place outside of mainland China. I picked *Pengpai* as an addition, because its target audience are younger online users. Also, despite its state ownership, it was given more leeway for its news coverage in comparison with other state-run news media. Because this project aims to examine the realities that the U.S. and

Chinese news media construct for their domestic news audience, only the Mandarin news coverage of *The GT* and *Pengpai* and English news coverage of *The NYT* and *The WSJ* were analyzed.

In order to learn how national interests and international relations were echoed in different countries' news coverage of the two protests, I constructed a control media group to explore whether the news coverage of the HK and BLM protests in this group shows similar patterns as the U.S. and Chinese news coverage of the protests, which, in turn, determines to what extent or in what way national interests and international relations were mirrored in the coverage of the protests. I chose news media in the U.K. and South Korea because the two countries have no direct interests regarding the two protests, as the protests did not take place in either of their territories regardless of the fact that Hong Kong was a former British colony until the late 1990s. Unlike the current Sino-U.S. relations, both the U.K. and South Korea have no tense relationship with either China or the U.S. In addition, the U.K. shares linguistic and more cultural similarities with the U.S. in comparison with China; South Korea shares geographical and some cultural similarities with China, as the two countries share a common tradition of Confucianism. In addition, similar types of protests took place in both the U.K. and South Korea—in 2011, people in London protested against police mistreatment of a Black man; in 2017, residents in South Korea protested against the former President Park Geun-Hye. Therefore, the anti-racism and anti-government protests and the linguistic, cultural, and geographic similarities make the U.K. and South Korea suitable to be the control news media group. The BBC World was selected

because it is an icon of the British media. *The Korean Times* was picked because it is one of the oldest newspapers to publish English news articles in South Korea.

Given that both the HK and BLM protests lasted for more than six months, the huge amount of news coverage of the two protests needs to be narrowed down. Thus, to make the analysis manageable, I chose three time points to conduct the analysis. For both protests, I first looked at the bar graph that ProQuest database provides. The graph shows the number of monthly publications ProQuest has on the HK and the BLM protests. Then, I checked how the two protests developed over time. Because the major development of the HK protest took place mainly in 2019, I focused on articles that were published in that year. Moreover, news media usually explain why the protests took place and give background information regarding the protests, which provides the detailed information that this project intends to analyze. Thus, the first time period I picked for the HK protest was June 9-16, 2019, when hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to protest for change. The airport clash between the police and the protesters in mid-August also drew a lot of attention from international news media, so the second time period selected is August 13-16, 2019. Later in mid-November, the violent protests that took place on college campuses also attracted the global news media's attention, so I chose November 17-21, 2019 as the third time period.

The NYT and *The WSJ*'s publications were accessed through ProQuest Newsstream. The keyword "Hong Kong protest" was used, and the time frame was set based on the time periods I chose. In addition, to maintain methodological consistency and also to make the

analysis manageable, the analysis did not include images or multimedia content, and included only the articles published in the two newspapers. *The NYT* published 18 articles about the HK protest between June 9-16, 2019, 23 articles between August 13-16, 2019, and 16 articles between November 17-21, 2019. *The WSJ* had 13 articles during the first time frame, 19 during the second, and 10 articles during the third. In total, 57 *NYT* and 42 *WSJ*'s news publications about the HK protest were analyzed.

When it comes to the Chinese publications, *The GT*'s contents were found via a Chinese database, CNKI, by using the same time frames. The same keyword, "Hong Kong protest" in Chinese, "香港游行" was used, but the keyword yielded 0 results. So I adjusted the keyword to "Hong Kong" in Chinese, "香港", and selected the ones whose headlines contain Chinese characters meaning "police" ("警察"), "riot" ("暴乱"), and "conspire with the West" ("与西方勾结"). *The GT* published 6 news articles between June 9-16, 2019, 26 articles between August 13-16, 2019, and 18 news articles about the HK protests between November 17-21, 2019. As for *Pengpai*, its publications were retrieved from its online website, thepaper.cn. I also used "Hong Kong protest" in Chinese as the keyword initially, but it also yielded no results. Thus, I used the same keyword modification technique as what I did for *The GT* searching process. However, as a news media that the Chinese Central government gave more leeway for its reporting, few articles are *Pengpai*'s own publication regarding the HK protest. The news articles it published were contents that were produced by highly state-run news media *Xinhua*, *CCTV* and *The People's Daily*. It did not publish any articles about the HK protest between June 9-16, 2019, but it reposted

63 news articles between August 13-16, 2019, and 46 news articles between November 17-21, 2019. In sum, 50 *The GT* and 109 *Pengpai* 's news articles about the HK protest were analyzed.

I also chose three time frames to conduct the discourse analysis of the BLM protest. Using the same technique as when deciding the time frames for the HK protest, the first time frame I chose for the BLM protest is May 28-31, 2020 because the protest took place after the death of George Floyd, and it started to turn violent on May 28. The second time frame I selected is July 21-25, 2020, as people in Portland, Oregon, were still protesting against racial injustice. Then, the third time frame is August 25-27, 2020, after the police shot Jacob Blake seven times in the back in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

The NYT and *The WSJ*'s publications about the BLM protest were retrieved through ProQuest Newsstream. I used the keyword "George Floyd protest" instead of "Black Lives Matter protest" to avoid publications that covered previous BLM protests. The time frame was also set based on the time points I selected. When searching for news reports about the protest in Portland, I modified the keyword into "George Floyd protest Portland" to narrow the results. Because the third protest was about Jacob Blake, I changed the keyword to "Black Lives Matter protest Kenosha" when searching for *The NYT*'s publications. However, this keyword yielded 0 results while searching through *The WSJ*'s publications, so I modified the keyword again into "Jacob Blake protest." *The NYT* published 58 articles about the initial protest for George Floyd between May 28-31, 2020, 21 articles between July 21-25, 2020, and 9 articles between August 25-27, 2020. *The WSJ* had 9 publications

about the initial protest during the first selected time point, 10 publications during the second selected time point, and 6 publications during the third selected time point. In total, 88 *NYT* and 25 *WSJ*'s news publications about the BLM protest were analyzed.

The GT's publications were still accessed through the Chinese database, CNKI. Because the phrase "Black Lives Matter" was not translated into a catchy phrase in Chinese, and Western names were hard for Chinese public to remember, the keywords "Black Lives Matter" and "George Floyd" were not used in every Chinese news report about the BLM protest. Therefore, the keyword "the United States", in Chinese "美国", was used to get a relatively exhaustive result. I chose news articles whose headlines contain the Chinese characters meaning "the police" ("警察"), "riot" ("暴乱"), "racial injustice" ("种族不公平"), "Minnesota" ("明尼苏达"), and "curfew" ("宵禁令"). *The GT* had 40 publications about the initial protest between May 28-31, 2020, one on July 20th about the protest in Portland, and one on August 26 about the protest in Kenosha. *Pengpai*'s articles were accessed via its online website; 31 publications about the initial protest were found through their special report on "Protests across America" between May 28-31, 2020. Two publications about the protest in Portland were found by using the keywords "African American" ("非裔") and "Portland" ("波特兰"). Then, seven publications about the protest for Jacob Blake in Kenosha were found by using the keywords "African American" ("非裔") and "Wisconsin" ("威斯康星"). In total, 42 *GT* and 40 *Pengpai*'s news articles about the BLM protest were analyzed.

When it comes to the control media group, *The Korean Times* and BBC World's publications were retrieved from their online websites (<https://www.koreatimes.co.kr> and <https://www.bbc.com>) by using the same time frames and keywords used to get access to US and Chinese news articles. As a result, *The Korean Times* had 16 stories about the HK protest between June 9-18, 2019, 8 stories between August 13-16, 2019 and 4 stories in November. In terms of the BLM protest, *The Korean Times* published 5 news articles in May and one article in August. In sum, 28 articles about the HK protest and 6 articles about the BLM protest from *The Korean Times* were analyzed. For the BBC, it published 21 news articles about the HK protest between June 9-18, 2019, 19 articles between August 13-16, 2019, 10 articles between November 17-21, 2019. As for the BLM protest, the BBC posted 23 news stories between May 28-31, 2020, 12 stories between July 21-25, 2020, 10 stories between August 25-27, 2020. In all, 50 news stories about the HK protests and 45 news stories about the BLM protest from the BBC were analyzed.

Following the collection of news articles, I first analyzed *The NYT* and *The WSJ*'s coverage of the overseas HK protest and *The GT* and *Pengpai*'s coverage of the foreign BLM protest to get an idea of how the selected U.S. and Chinese news media constructed similar or different discourses of international protests and national images of each other. Then, I examined *The NYT* and *The WSJ*'s coverage of its domestic BLM protest and *The GT* and *Pengpai*'s coverage of its domestic HK protest to learn how the chosen U.S. and Chinese news media constructed similar or different discourse about their domestic protests. While reading and analyzing the news articles about the HK and BLM protests, I identified reemerging themes. Then, I categorized similar news media texts into these themes. Also,

I wrote analytic memos, which recorded my interpretation and feeling of the media texts and sentences in news articles that can be used as supporting evidence of my major claims. Later on, the analysis of how the two U.S. newspapers covered the domestic protest compared to the international protest, and how the two Chinese news media covered the domestic protest compared to the foreign protest was carried out based on the analytic memos. In addition, whenever I used a quotation, I re-read the pertinent news article to double-check my interpretation of the media text.

After analyzing the selected U.S. and Chinese news coverage of the HK and BLM protests, I used the same technique to analyze the BBC and *The Korean Times*' news articles. The analysis results are presented in the following three chapters—the first chapter examines the discourse that the selected U.S. and Chinese news outlets constructed of their domestic protests and international protests. The second chapter explores the national images that the U.S. and Chinese news media constructed of each other in their coverage of the foreign protests. The third chapter unearths the discourse of the HK and BLM protests that the control group news media, the BBC and *The Korean Times*, constructed.

Chapter 4 Analysis: Domestic Protests vs. International Protests

Journalists are more likely to portray their own countries positively than countries that do not share geographic and linguistic similarities or have a tense relation with their own countries (e.g., Goss, 2015; Jones and Sheets, 2009; Nossek, 2004). More specifically, when it comes to news coverage of protests, news media tend to report the overseas protests as more legitimate than protests happening in their own countries (Kilgo, 2018).

This chapter answers one of the overarching research questions: How did the selected U.S. and Chinese news media construct discourses about domestic protests similarly or differently from their discourses about foreign protests? The comparative analysis results will be presented in two themes: (1) the media discourse about the protesters, and (2) the media discourse about the police, National Guard, federal agents, political leaders and governments. Under each theme, the analysis will be carried out by exploring the following questions: How did the selected U.S. newspapers cover the protests in the United States [domestic protest] compared to the protests in Hong Kong [international protest]? (2) How did the chosen Chinese news media cover the protests in Hong Kong [domestic protest] compared to the protests in the United States [international protest]? (3) How did the U.S. media coverage of a domestic protest compare with the Chinese media coverage of a domestic protest? (4) How did the U.S. media coverage of an international protest compare with the Chinese media coverage of an international protest?

In addition, because within the same U.S. news outlet, newsroom and opinion section are written by different groups of employees (“New York Times Editorial,” 2018), but journalists in the state-run Chinese news are responsible for writing both news articles

and editorials. Furthermore, the U.S. and Chinese journalism fields have divergent rules and practices, the following section would examine the two U.S. newspapers' news discourse and editorial discourse separately.

News and Editorial Discourses of the Protesters: Pro-democracy Protesters or Lawless Criminals?

Compared with *The NYT*'s publication of 88 articles during the selected time frames of the BLM protest, *The WSJ*'s publications are much fewer—25 articles were posted during the set time frames. Seven were published during the chosen time periods. At the same time, *The NYT* published six commentaries. In spite of a similar amount of editorial pieces, the total number of opinion pieces that were studied accounts for the divergent proportions of the total amount of *The NYT* and *The WSJ*'s news articles that were analyzed—6.8 percent of *The NYT* articles in contrast to 28 percent of *The WSJ* articles were opinion or editorial pieces.

While constructing the news discourse of the domestic protesters in the BLM protest, the two U.S. newspapers both indicated that people have legitimate reasons for protesting. Moreover, despite the usage of a sympathetic tone while describing the reasons, a neutral tone and negative tone were also seen to be used to constitute the news discourse of the protesters, as the two newspapers' portrayal of the protesters fell into the protest paradigm, which focuses on portraying the clashes between the police and protesters, giving voice to the public who often have a shallow understanding of why the protest took place and relying on official sources. When it comes to the editorial discourse about the protesters, the tone seems to reflect the political leaning of the newspapers, as the conservative *WSJ* was more likely to use a negative tone, and the liberal *NYT* more

frequently used a sympathetic tone. This section will start with the names the two newspapers used to address the people who participated in the protests.

News articles published by *The NYT* and *The WSJ* commonly used “protesters” or “demonstrators” to label people who participated in the demonstrations. Their usage of the words “protesters” and “demonstrators” is consistent within most of their coverage of the protest. For instance, *The NYT* quoted the statement that Attorney General William Barr made regarding the violent protest in Minneapolis. In that statement, Barr used the strong phrases “domestic terrorists” and “outside radicals and agitators” to name the protesters, but *The NYT* chose to use the phrase “violent protesters” to differentiate from the words utilized in Barr’s statement. The terms “protesters” and “demonstrators” reflect the two newspapers’ neutral portrayal of the protesters, as the two words are used to indicate members of the public who participate in marches. The terms “rioters”, “looters” and “radicals” can also be seen in the news coverage of the protesters, but in contrast to “protesters” or “demonstrators,” these words might carry more horrifying feelings, as they seem to indicate people who either committed crime or support extreme political ideas. However, when using these terms, *The NYT*’s article described the actions of rioters and looters, which might lessen the scary feelings generated by the audience. For example, “looters shoved aside barricades to vandalize and ransack stores Sunday” might prevent the audience from picturing more frightening actions carried out by looters.

However, the words that *The WSJ* opinion pieces used to name the protesters showed the very negative editorial discourse it constructed about the protesters. This neutral usage of words did not appear in the editorial discourse that *The WSJ* constructed of the protesters. Senator Ted Cruz’s piece about the protest in Portland provides a vivid

example not only of how *The WSJ* opinion pieces constructed an antipathetic discourse about domestic BLM protesters, but also how conservative Republicans constructed political discourse about the protesters. In his commentary, Cruz (2020, para. 2) used strong verbs to describe the actions of the protesters. He wrote that “[t]he area radicals took over in Portland last week is the second autonomous zone lawless criminals have set up in the city during the eight weeks of riots since the death of George Floyd.” As previously mentioned, the labels “criminals”, “rioters” and “radicals” carry more scary feelings, as they are used to describe people who either committed crime, brought situation into chaos or support extreme political ideas. Furthermore, the usage of the phrases “took over” and establishment of “autonomous zone” reinforce the fearful feeling, as the phrases suggest that the protesters started to possess the place that used to belong to the general public and imply that the general public is losing control of both the place and the situation. “The Mess in Portland” is another example of using strong words to refer to protesters. The article stated that “Anarchists and rioters have wreaked havoc on Portland, Ore., for nearly two months” (“The Mess in Portland,” 2020, para. 1). The words “anarchists,” “rioters” and “wreaked havoc” all generate the same terrifying feeling as Cruz’s pieces, since these words also painted an out-of-control picture of the protesting scene.

Nonetheless, despite the commentaries of *The WSJ*’s labelling of the protesters might generate fear, the two newspapers used neutral and sympathetic tones to explain the reason why the protest took place and construct the news discourse about the protesters. They explained that the white police officer’s killing of George Floyd is the primary reason why people are protesting. In occasional cases, the two newspapers mentioned the

demonstrators' demand and gave voice to both the peaceful and violent protesters. As cases in point, during the protest in Washington D.C. in late May 2020, *The NYT* described the slogan protesters chanted "We want charges... We want convictions. No more acquittals. We want these people to be held accountable" and interviewed protesters who think it is time for people to show respect for Black people, as they built the country (McCreesh, 2020, para. 6). A 19-year-old specified that they are being violent because police treat the protesters brutally with rubber bullets and mace. They have been peaceful for long enough (McCreesh, 2020). The quotations from the protesters give readers a chance to understand the protest from the demonstrators' perspective and allow the readers to learn that the protesters are not people who only damage the city. They are really human beings just like us.

In spite of giving voice to the protesters, the news discourse *The NYT* and *The WSJ* constructed about the protesters is also negative in several cases. As an example, the protesters' explanations of why they protest violently are followed by the comments from the political officials, credible civil rights leaders such as the son of Martin Luther King, or family members of the victims of police brutality. They usually clearly indicate that destruction could undermine the result and ask the protesters to remain calm. Besides, some illustrate that burning is a felony to prevent people from doing violent things. Furthermore, the discourse of the protesters that the two newspapers construct is also about people who confront the police, block the highways, set buildings and trash bins on fire, and ransack shops on the streets (Eligon, 2020; Lazo & Hackman, 2020). At the same time, they also gave voice to civilians who expressed that they understood why people protest, but it was heartbreaking to see destruction, and indicated that the protesters lost their purpose of

protesting by bring chaos to the city (Ailworth & Bachman, 2020), which in turn, delegitimated the demonstrators' reasons for protesting and generated antipathy about the looting and burning actions that protesters carried out.

The sympathetic and negative delineation of the BLM protesters are also seen in the editorial discourse of the protesters that *The NYT* and *The WSJ* shaped. Notwithstanding the similarities between the news discourse that *The NYT* and *The WSJ* formed of the protesters, the editorial discourse the two newspapers constructed shows a stark contrast—*The NYT* opinion pieces used a dominantly sympathetic tone in contrast to *The WSJ* commentaries' intensely negative tone. In an opinion piece published by *The NYT*, the author wrote that

There is a common refrain from street protesters in the wake of death after death after death of men of color at the hands of the police: "No justice, no peace." In the absence of justice, there has been no peace.

When citizens dare to protest police violence, say by kneeling at a sporting event, they are branded "anti-police" and un-American.

(*The New York Times*, "How Cops Get Away With Murder," May 30, 2020)

The two paragraphs both reflect the author's sympathy towards the protesters. The four-time usage of the word "death" reminds readers that the tragedy—people of color dying at the hands of police—has been happening repetitively over years. The phrase "common refrain" suggests that protesters were enduring and constraining their anger and pain over the deaths of men of color for years. In addition, by telling how people who peacefully protest in sports events are mistreated and explaining that demonstrators' violent actions were due to the lack of justice, the audience are able to see and understand the situations from the protesters' perspective.

However, *The WSJ's* editorial discourse cast the protesters in a dominantly negative light. In its opinion pieces, not merely were the damages and destruction emphasized, but also the protesters' reasons for protesting were delegitimized. As cases in point:

Demonstrators have launched large fireworks at law enforcement, shone laser pointers at their eyes, thrown fecal matter, and assaulted at least one officer with a hammer.

The Department of Homeland Security reports that rioters are armed with rifles, tasers, slingshots and sledgehammers and have committed multiple acts of arson. On July 3 someone firebombed the Hatfield U.S. Courthouse, and scarcely a day passes without graffiti and property damage.

(*The Wall Street Journal*, "The Mess in Portland," July 21, 2020)

Rioters say they want justice for Mr. Blake, but instead of waiting on the judicial system they laid siege to the Kenosha County Courthouse, used fireworks as weapons, and attacked police. The Kenosha News reports that arsonists have damaged or destroyed some 30 buildings.

(*The Wall Street Journal*, "The Fires of Kenosha," August 27, 2020)

Besides the usage of the term 'rioters' which might generate fright, their portrayal of the protesters' actions such as "launched large fireworks," or "assaulted...officer with a hammer" also painted protesters as people who carried out extreme and dangerous actions, which are also likely to create fear or even hatred among the audience. Moreover, the depiction "[rioters] say they want justice for Mr. Blake, but instead of waiting on the judicial system they laid siege to the Kenosha County Courthouse" delegitimized the reasons why people were demonstrating—it identified "waiting on the judicial system" as the way that protesters could seek justice for Mr. Blake, but other actions such as sieging the courthouse were not. Then, in another commentary, the article not only depicted the cities where protests took place as cities "plagued by unrest" but mentioned that Trump likened those cities as "war zones." The phrases "plagued by unrest" and "war zones" all show the negative feeling the author had about the protest, as the word "plague" implied

that protests made the city sick and nonfunctional. “War zones” presented a dangerous and chaotic scene, which might also generate anxiety among the readers.

In sum, instead of using a neutral tone or adding a new perspective to the news discourse, *The NYT* and *The WSJ*’s editorial discourse about the domestic BLM protesters used an increasingly sympathetic and antipathetic tone respectively. *The NYT*’s opinion piece pointed out the difficulties citizens faced when protesting peacefully, which the news discourse did not present. *The WSJ*’s commentaries also used stronger words to address the protesters, emphasizing the damages and destruction and delegitimize the protesters reasons for demonstrating, which are less obviously seen in the news discourse.

Returning to the news discourse that the two U.S. newspapers constituted of the BLM protesters, it is noteworthy that the tones used by *The NYT* to portray the protesters vary over the three selected time points. In May, *The NYT*’s coverage suggested that the protesters have legitimate reasons for protesting; they are frustrated and in pain over what happened to George Floyd. However, a neutral and sometimes negative tone was used to describe the destruction and the overall situation. For example, when explaining the reasons why people are protesting, *The NYT* illustrated that “mass protest against police brutality” was “spurred most recently by the death last week of George Floyd” (Rabin, 2020, para. 1). While describing the protest scene, the clashes between the protesters and police are commonly seen in *The NYT*’s coverage, and the protesters did lead to destruction. For example, “protesters in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn confronted the police in a series of street melees, hurling empty bottles and pieces of debris at officers who responded with billy clubs and pepper spray”, “where despite a newly issued curfew, people burned

buildings and turned the city's streets into a smoldering battleground on Friday night" ("Across Country," 2020, para. 8).

Then, in its July coverage of the protest in Portland, *The NYT*'s stories seem to use a more sympathetic tone to portray the protesters. When the Trump administration dispatched federal agents to Portland, *The NYT* saw it as an unnecessary move. Moreover, when constructing the discourse of protesters in Portland, *The NYT* gave voice to the mayor of Portland, Ted Wheeler, who was participating in the protest with the demonstrators and talked about the feeling of being tear gassed (Baker, 2020). The painful feeling Wheeler discussed gave the audience a chance to learn the situation from the protesters' perspective and might generate sympathetic feelings from the audience as well. Furthermore, *The NYT* had an article which specifically explained what the protesters wanted and why the protest persisted for weeks (Giulia McDonnell Nieto, 2020). While covering the protest scene, it focused on detailing the protesters' injuries and the gear they used to protect themselves from being tear-gassed. The gear the protesters used included umbrellas, which was a tactic that *The NYT* mentioned the protesters learned from Yellow Umbrella protesters in Hong Kong. Also, it told the stories of a veteran and walls of moms and dads. The veteran was beaten by the federal agents, simply because he came close and asked the agents a question. His finger broke after being beaten by the agents. His experience is enough to show that he was a victim of the protest, which again could generate readers' sympathy (Baker, 2020; Baker & Fuller, 2020). The walls of moms and dads who pushed the tear gas away from the crowd also cast a positive light on the protesters, as they were trying to help others.

The tone *The NYT* used to portray the demonstrators in the Kenosha protest in August is similar to the tone used in May, but more negative. In the lead of one article, *The*

NYT called the protest in Kenosha “another angry outcry in the streets, another disturbing trail of destruction that had the potential to overshadow the message of the need to end police violence and racism” (Eligon, 2020, para. 2). The phrases “another,” “angry outcry,” and “disturbing destruction” reflect *The NYT*’s usage of a somewhat weary tone, as the negative feelings evoked by “angry outcry” and “disturbing destruction” combined with “another” suggest that unfavorable things such as destruction happen over and over again. The phrase “overshadow the message” shows a doubt of the result the protesters might get by protesting violently, despite the fact that the protesters hope to end police brutality and racial injustice.

As for the news discourse that *The WSJ* constructed, it is similar to *The NYT*’s. However, its portrayal of protesters in the Portland demonstration is harsher than *The NYT*’s. Although it also mentioned mayor Wheeler’s participation in the protest against police brutality and the intervention of federal agents, and being tear-gassed during the protest, it did not give voice to the mayor and let him tell the feeling of being tear-gassed. Instead, it explained that the local police officers under Wheeler’s leadership were also accused of being brutal, which suggested that Wheeler did not do a better job than the federal agents (Lazo, 2020). Ultimately, *The WSJ*’s news discourse might question whether Wheeler is qualified to protest and to challenge the federal government’s intervention. In addition, the journalist who covered the protest in Portland used police sources to depict demonstrators’ activities instead of describing protesters’ actions based on their observations to emphasize destruction and damages. As a case in point:

They blocked streets, gave speeches and marched, Portland police said. Afterward, people spray-painted buildings, including a federal courthouse, and then began trying to force their way into that courthouse by climbing on a gate and pounding on protective plywood using hammers, crowbars and other tools, police said. The

protesters broke through the protective barriers and shattered at least one window. Federal authorities responded by using a variety of munitions, scattering protesters. (*The Wall Street Journal*, “U.S. News: Portland Braces for More Protests, Clashes,” July 22, 2020)

Nonetheless, *The NYT* only published opinion pieces in the selected May time frame, and *The WSJ* published two editorials in the chosen May and August time points, so a change in tone to depict the protesters was not found. In addition, the negative light *The WSJ* cast on protesters in Portland was not cast on protesters who demonstrate overseas and for a country that the U.S. has a tense relationship with.

When it comes to constructing the news and editorial discourses of the HK protesters, the two U.S. newspapers used a more sympathetic and positive tone than that with which they construct the discourse of the BLM protesters. Even though in occasional cases, they also mentioned the protesters’ confrontation with the police, blocking of traffic and destruction, the stories were mainly told from the protesters’ perspective. The protesters were portrayed as the victims of the demonstration. Their actions were backed up with legitimate reasons.

Similar to how the two newspapers address people who participate in the BLM protest, “protesters” and “demonstrators” are also the names that *The NYT* and *The WSJ* news articles and opinion pieces used to describe the people who took part in the HK protest, but an adjective “pro-democracy” was added to describe them (e.g. Bradsher, 2019; Melchior, 2019). Without further explaining why people in Hong Kong are protesting, the adjective “pro-democracy” is enough to show the legitimization of the protest. Later on, in August, as the protest continued, the two newspapers used the word “anti-government” to describe the protesters in the news discourse they constructed (e.g. Zhong, 2019; Salama & Leary, 2019). Compared with the word “pro-democracy”, “anti-government” is more

neutral and shows the nature of the protest, as the articles generally explained that people were protesting for abolishing the extradition law, which would allow criminals to be sent to mainland China. And because the bill was suspended rather than fully withdrawn by August 2019, the protest kept on driving anti-government sentiments (Ramzy & Mullany, 2019). Furthermore, other than telling how the Chinese news media and officials named the HK protesters, neither the selected news articles nor the opinion pieces from both *The NYT* and *The WSJ* used strong words “rioters”, “anarchists”, “radicals” or “criminals” to describe the protesters, which prevented the generation of a fearful feeling about the protesters.

Both newspapers clearly explained why people were protesting by directly stating that people were concerned that the Central Chinese government might arrest people from Hong Kong who made statements that the mainland government did not appreciate. Besides that, they also gave voice to protesters who explained that they do not want their rights to be taken away by the mainland government and want to give their children a better future (Ramzy, 2019). One of the Hong Kong legislative council members indicated that “Hong Kong people are not asking for the moon,” “just an adherence to the Basic Law created in the handover that preserved Hong Kong’s freedoms, including its political and judicial autonomy.” “We are simply asking for something as promised”(Daniel, 2019, para. 20). The quotation shows the readers that their request is the most basic, understandable and legitimate request that should be fulfilled. Moreover, to show the concerns of the protesters might be true, the newspapers provided two specific examples: the disappearance of a Chinese billionaire and men who published books about mainland political leaders that the Chinese government does not like (e.g. Ramzy, 2019; Wong,

2019). The quotations from the protesters and the specific cases of how people disappeared all suggest the necessity of demonstrating for the withdrawal of the revising law.

While constructing the news discourse about the HK protesters, the two newspapers repeatedly emphasized the amount and diverse backgrounds of the protesters in their leads or first several paragraphs to show that a huge amount of Hong Kongers from diverse industries were participating in the protest and were unhappy with the revision of the extradition law that would allow Hong Kongers to be sent to mainland China to face trials. Even though the two newspapers also mentioned the amount of the BLM protesters by using words and phrases such as “mass” or “hundreds of thousands of,” in the case of the Hong Kong protest, they also helped the readers to *interpret* the numbers of HK protesters by explaining “one in seven residents of the territory” besides the usage of phrases “tens of thousands of” or “as many as a million people” (e.g. Ramzy, 2019; Bradsher, 2019, para. 7). Moreover, the newspapers also describe that from college students to small business owners, people from different occupations are participating in the protest. As a case in point, “[more] than 100 small businesses, cafes, civic groups and social services -- a sliver of Hong Kong's society -- have said they would stop work on Wednesday, when Hong Kong's legislature will resume consideration of the bill” (Ramzy, 2019, para.9). Both the “one in seven residents” and “more than 100 small businesses” give the audience a sense that not just activists or a specific group of people are attending the protest, but the public.

The news discourse that *The NYT* and *The WSJ* constructed of the public shows that they are the victims of the protests; they are brave, persistent and willing to help one another. One of *The NYT*'s articles describes the demonstrators as “unarmed protesters fleeing like ants from clouds of tear gas or facing off with riot police officers pointing

batons at them” (Ives & Stevenson, 2019, para. 4). The unarmed protesters and riot police officers make a stark contrast, showing that the protesters are in a powerless position, but the police are in powerful positions with protecting gear and weapons. The phrase “fleeing like ants” presents a vivid scene of how protesters react to the tear gas. The word ants not only dehumanizes the protesters, but indicates that they are tiny and helpless while facing the police officers. These elements reinforce that the protesters are the victims in this situation. This is not the only time *The NYT* shared the story of protesters running from tear gas. Days later, in another article, a similar scene was presented: “With a volley of tear gas canisters, the police forced the protesters to retreat from the Legislative Council and into the streets. There, the protesters engaged in several skirmishes with riot officers, who hit them with batons...one officer severely beat a protester who fell down during the retreat, steps away from the Legislative Council” (Ives, 2019, para 14). The verbs “force” “hit” “beat” and “fell down” all reveal the brutal actions carried out by the police, which made the protesters the victims again. Additionally, *The NYT* and *The WSJ* also show what gear the protesters were using to protect themselves. For instance, “[m]any were young people who wore black T-shirts and wielded tools to help ward off pepper spray and tear gas, including hard hats, goggles and umbrellas” (Ives, 2019, para. 22). The protesters’ usage of the umbrellas automatically led the journalists to connect it to the Yellow Umbrella Protest in 2014—another protest in Hong Kong where people requested a more transparent election, but the police then met them with pepper spray, so the protesters used umbrellas as a tool to protect themselves (Ives, 2019). The portrayal of the gear used by the protesters also allows the audience to understand the protest from the demonstrators’ perspective.

Furthermore, despite the similar actions conducted by the HK protesters, *The NYT* and *The WSJ* provided more explanations to legitimize their actions in comparison with their coverage of the domestic BLM protesters. In June 2019, the demonstrators blocked roads around Hong Kong's legislature. *The NYT* explained that the protesters did such actions because lawmakers would debate the legislation of the extradition soon, which indicated that the protesters' actions aimed to block lawmakers from passing the bill that would allow Hong Kongers to be sent to mainland China (Stevenson & May, 2019). Then, in August 2019, when protesters gathered at the airport, one of the leads of *The NYT*'s articles did not focus on the consequences that the suspension of airport operation brought. Instead, the focus of the article was the power of the thousands of protesters who brought "one of the world's busiest transportation hubs to a near halt" (Ramzy & Mullany, 2019, para.1). In addition, *The NYT* mentioned that some protesters did not generate disruption and they only wanted to get their words out, as they sat-in at the airport and gave pamphlets to travelers to explain their grievances.

The NYT mentioned the violent actions the protesters were doing as well. It said that some of the protesters pushed, punched and kicked one man and bound the hands and feet and punched another person. However, rather than attributing one of the men's fainting to the protesters' beating by saying the protesters pushed, punched and kicked the man into unconsciousness, *The NYT* described that "the protesters pushed him to the ground, punching and kicking him, and he eventually fainted, prompting the ambulance evacuation" (Ives et al., 2019, para. 33). The lack of attribution to the protesters prevented audiences from receiving a brutal and ruthless impression of them. Furthermore, it explained that the man was beaten because protesters accused him of being a police officer from the mainland,

and the other whose hands and feet were bound by protesters was accused of being a “fake” journalist. This support legitimizes the protesters’ violent actions and gives the readers a chance to understand why the protesters conducted such violent actions (Ives et al., 2019).

The NYT also presented the economic consequences of the operation blocking the airport and gave voice to passengers whose plans were interrupted by the protest. Some indicated that they were frustrated, but some showed their sympathy to the protesters (e.g. Zhong, 2019; Ives et al. 2019). Nonetheless, no matter what the passengers commented, *The NYT* ends the story by saying that the protesters held a news conference to apologize for the inconvenience and their violent actions (Lim, 2019), giving voice to the protesters who stated that “without a bit of violence and political pressure on the authorities, you don't get a thing” (Bradsher, 2019, para. 9). The holding of a news conference showed that the protesters cared about the public. The quotation from the protesters again legitimized their violent actions and seems to suggest that the protesters believed that this was the only way to be heard by the authorities.

The news discourse that *The WSJ* constructed of the HK protesters is close to *The NYT*'s. *The WSJ* mentioned the tourism loss, the tense clashes between the protesters and the police, the concerns and possibilities of losing support from the public (Emont, 2019), and the fact that demonstrators were getting increasingly militant (Duehren et al., 2019). Nevertheless, it also explained that these demonstrators were doing self-protection, as they “stockpiled firebombs at the university and constructed roadblocks from debris and masonry to prevent police vehicles from approaching” (Lyons et al., 2019, para. 24). In addition, regardless of the destruction and the dissatisfaction from the public, *The WSJ* also

ends the stories by giving voice to the protesters who indicated that there are no other ways of keeping the movement moving except to confront the police (Lyons et al., 2019).

The editorial discourse that *The NYT* and *The WSJ* constructed about the overseas HK protesters was quite similar to their news discourse. *The NYT* published four commentaries during the selected three time frames, which accounted for seven percent of the pieces that were analyzed. *The WSJ* posted 12 commentaries during the same time period, which comprised nearly 29 percent of the articles that were analyzed. The opinion pieces from both newspapers indicated and reaffirmed the legitimacy and necessity for Hong Kongers to protest. In addition, they also constructed protesters as brave and persistent young people who were fighting for their basic rights and future against the erosion from the mainland Chinese government. As a case in point, a commentary from *The NYT* wrote that “They [the protesters] are young people, a great many of them, who ardently don't want to come further under the repressive rule of the Chinese Communists” (“Defiance of Xi's Rule,” 2019, para.2). Furthermore, opinion pieces also implied that the protesters were willing to help one another when observed from a bystander perspective. Editorial page writer, Jillian Kay Melchior, went to the protesting scene and commented that the young protesters were brave to fight for the abolishment of the bill despite the discomfort of being tear gassed and other difficulties they faced. At the scene, she found that the protesters were trying to help one another. In her words, “I watch a volunteer first-aid crew descend on a young woman sprawled out on the floor. She seems to be wheezing and weepy from the tear gas. Others huddle around her and pop umbrellas to keep anyone from filming her face” (Melchior, 2019, para.7). The depiction of the assistance that the protesters offered to one another presented them as people who care about their fellow

protesters, which cast a positive light on them. Nevertheless, even though *The NYT* and *The WSJ* also constructed a positive and sympathetic editorial discourse of the protesters, they pointed out that disruption, violence and destruction at the airport were unacceptable in opinion pieces, which make a difference from the news discourse. In one of *The NYT*'s commentaries, the author wrote

Over Monday and Tuesday, the protesters went too far. Thousands descended on the Hong Kong airport, seriously disrupting operations, scuffling with travelers and beating at least two men from China. At one fraught moment, a riot police officer cornered by protesters drew his gun but did not fire.

The scenes of chaos and violence at its normally impeccable airport threatened a huge disruption of the city's economy, and came as a shock even to the demonstrators.

(*The New York Times*, "Hong Kong's Defiance of Mr. Xi's Rule," August 15, 2019)

Unlike the news articles that rarely attribute disruption and violence to protesters directly, this commentary clearly attributed the responsibilities to the protesters. Nonetheless, in spite of the attribution, the commentary concluded by telling the story that the protesters came out to apologize, which also helped prevent the generation of hateful feelings toward the protesters.

In contrast to how *The NYT* and *The WSJ* construct the news and editorial discourse of BLM protesters, a more positive light was cast on the HK protesters, not only in regard to their reason for protesting, but also the protesters' actions. While the BLM protesters' violent actions were noted as undermining the protest results or not helping the situation, the HK protesters' violent behaviors were constructed as the only solution to the authorities' ignoring their demands. These differences are not only seen in the selected U.S. newspapers' coverage of their domestic protests and overseas protests, but they can also

be seen in selected Chinese news media's coverage of their domestic and overseas protests. The following section will analyze the discourse of the Chinese news media's construction of the protesters in detail.

News Discourse of the Protesters: Mobs or Protesters?

When constructing the discourse of their domestic protesters in Hong Kong, the Chinese news media *The Global Times* (GT) and *Pengpai* cast a completely negative light on the protesters. They portrayed the protesters as antagonists of the country who do not have legitimate reasons for protesting and do not have the characteristics of a good citizen. Moreover, under the discourses the two Chinese news media constructed, the protesters' actions not only generated the general public's dissatisfaction but huge economic losses (Ling et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2019).

It is vital to learn who was considered a protester in Chinese news media's coverage of the demonstration. In fact, *The GT* and *Pengpai* showed a totally different picture of the protesters compared to the U.S. newspapers. Rather than saying that one in seven residents in Hong Kong was protesting, the two Chinese news media claimed that only a handful of people were participating in the protests and they did not represent the general public of Hong Kong. In contrast, the general public from various professions supported the law, the police and the Hong Kong government. They opposed any violent actions that were conducted by the protesters ("Opposition conspired with West," 2019). In addition, instead of showing the differences between the numbers of demonstrators that the police and the protesters provided, the two news media accused the protesters of exaggerating the numbers of protesters ("Opposition conspired with West," 2019), which implies that the

number the protesters gave was untrustworthy. Nevertheless, in a rare case, *The GT* did report that a large crowd had demonstrated on the streets, but following that, it directed the readers' attention to the significant drop in the number of protesters. *The GT* explained that people who were aware of why the protest took place were quitting and those who were still protesting were actually deceived by a few radicals ("Opposition conspired with West," 2019).

The names that the Chinese news media used to address the protesters also reflected only the negative side of the protesters. The words "mobs" ("暴徒"), "radicals" ("激进分子"), "oppositions" ("反对派") and "wasted youth" ("废青") were the most frequently used by the two Chinese news media to refer to the protesters (e.g. Wu, 2019; Ye, 2019). Without even describing what actions the protesters did, the names that the Chinese news media used not only demonized the protesters and generated negative feelings, but also put the protesters in the antagonist category and gave the readers the impression that these protesters were useless, violent, ruthless and frightening. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that *Pengpai*'s stories regarding the protest were reposts from three highly state-run news media: *Xinhua*, China Central Television (CCTV) and *The People's Daily*. More importantly, *The GT* and *Pengpai* only had a few articles that reported on the protest when it was mostly peaceful. As the protest turned increasingly violent, the amount of their coverage skyrocketed, which legitimized the names that Chinese news media used to portray the protesters.

Speaking to the reasons why people were protesting, *The GT* and *Pengpai* disregarded and negated the demonstrators' reasons for protesting and proposed their own reasoning as to why the protest took place. In one of *The GT*'s articles, rather than saying that the demonstrators or, in their word, "mobs" are protesting for the abolition of the revision of extradition law, as they are concerned with being sent to the mainland to face trials, it began by stating, as if a fact, that the extradition law was politicized and mislabelled ("Riots in Hong Kong," 2019). The law according to their depiction is totally legitimate, as there is a rising number of interactions between Hong Kong and mainland China, and the legislation system in the mainland is also improving ("Opposition conspired with West," 2019). Therefore, the concern of some people in Hong Kong over the differences between the mainland and Hong Kong's legislation systems might lead to some risks that would not become reality. Such a description was published by one of the opinion pieces from *The GT*, which was the most clear depiction that at least partially implied the demonstrators' reasons for protesting ("Riots in Hong Kong," 2019). However, instead of explaining the protesters' reasons directly, the article asserted that people's concerns were not going to materialize, which leaves no room for the readers to interpret the situation by themselves but asks them to take what the article suggested as fact. The usage of phrases "some people" and "some risks" indicated that *The GT* was aware of the demonstrators' reasons for protesting, but it withheld such information by not telling the readers who *some people* were and what risks there might be.

Moreover, the two Chinese news media mentioned that such a law also exists in the United States and other Western countries and made reference to the Snowden case in 2013,

as the U.S. requested that the Hong Kong government extradite Edward Snowden, who leaked highly classified national security U.S. documents, but the Hong Kong government declined. Jay Carney, the former White House press secretary, commented that the Hong Kong government allowed the criminal to flee (Ling et al., 2019). The reference to the law in Western countries reinforces their point that the revision of the law was legitimate. The reference to the Snowden case seems to implicitly suggest that the U.S. was being hypocritical by criticizing the extradition law in Hong Kong. When the U.S. wanted their criminals, the U.S. government accused the Hong Kong government of allowing a criminal to flee, but when criminals from other countries needed to be extradited, the U.S. challenged the legitimacy of the law. Additionally, the two news media stated that people from various industries supported the law, and the law closed the loophole in Hong Kong's legislative system, which reaffirmed that the revision of the law is completely legitimate.

Then, as the legitimacy of the law was presented, the two news media constructed their explanation of why people are protesting. They said that the slogan "anti-China extradition" was designed by the opposition for this round of the protest. On the surface level, they pointed fingers at the government of Hong Kong's special administrative region. In fact, they were using such a slogan to generate fears among the general public to be scared of the mainland and the central government and break the bond between Hong Kong and China ("Riots in Hong Kong,"2019). Rather than saying the protesters were spontaneous and leaderless, the two Chinese news media claimed that the protests were planned by several radicals who conspired with foreign forces. The radicals' meeting with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other politicians were great proof of this (Ye, 2019; Zhao,

2019). As to the public who were participating in the protests, they were fooled by the radicals. The aim of radicals who were connected with Western forces was overthrowing the Hong Kong government by staging a Hong Kong-version color revolution, breaking the “one country, two system” policy and making Hong Kong independent. Ultimately, they used Hong Kong as a weapon to threaten China and prevent China from developing (“Recording truth in Hong Kong,” 2019).

An article reposted by *Pengpai*, which was originally written by CCTV, described that a group of “directors” were behind the protesters. They were a very professional team who staged the Hong Kong-version color revolution to break the “one country, two system” policy. These “directors” hired the protesters to act based on the scripts they provided. Their plan was very precise. Their actors had very specific hand gestures to share information with one another. This team of directors also distributed supplies such as food, helmets and masks to their actors. Their actors were paid based on their specific actions. There was a price for people who chanted slogans, a price for actors who got police to engage with them physically, a price for people who exhibited bravery and a price for people who were prepared to die. In the end, the article concluded that these directors were the radicals, and their actors were mobs roaming around Hong Kong like stray cats (Chai, 2019). The article clearly identified the radicals, perhaps as a way to show their credibility. The protesters’ reasons for demonstrating were delegitimized by indicating their actions were paid.

Both *The GT* and *Pengpai* were quite cynical in tone when portraying the protesters. The protesters’ gatherings, peaceful or violent, were emphasized as illegal. Their

characteristics were depicted as irrational, illogical, ungrateful and crazy. Their actions not only led to destruction but various economic losses.

While reporting the protesters' gathering at the airport in August 2019, *The GT* and *Pengpai* typically emphasized that the protesters' gatherings were illegal (Zhao et al., 2019). Furthermore, the two news media only presented the actions of the protesters in a way that would generate unfavorable feelings from readers. As cases in point, several of *The GT*'s articles focused on the trash that the protesters threw. They described that the places where the protesters passed by were full of trash, which reminded people of the Occupy Central movement, another illegal gathering (Ye, 2019). Even though *The NYT* also references the 2014 movement, *The GT*'s focus is on illegality and trash instead of the mistreatment of the protesters, which retrieved Chinese readers' negative memory.

Other articles portrayed that the protesters stuck a slogan to an old man's back as he refused to take their flyers; they also blamed a passenger from Australia who did not support their actions, in addition to stopping a pregnant woman to ask her to listen to their point of view (Zhao et al., 2019). Besides, the protesters were delineated as stopping subways and the airport from operating and blocking the roads, which led students, commuters, patients and other residents to delay their plans, and airlines to cancel around 230 flights (Wu, 2019; Zhao et al., 2019). The protest caused more than 300-billion-HK-dollars lost for tourism, retail, catering and export trading from June to September (Chai, 2019). The protesters' actions of littering, failing to tolerate different voices, interrupting other people's lives and causing huge economic loss all gave the audience the impression that the protesters do not have good citizens' characteristics and the protests need to end.

Moreover, the protesters' beating up of a man from the mainland, the gear the protesters used during protests and the general public's fear of protesters became evidence that the Chinese news media used to cast them as mobs. An article that was reposted by *Pengpai* portrayed the protesters tying up a passenger from Shenzhen, China. They used a laser gun to point at him and made the passenger lose his consciousness. When the police and medical personnel came, they prevented these people from treating him, which the article suggested was "crazy" (Li, 2019). Later on, in other articles from *Pengpai*, rather than focusing on the protective gear such as goggles and masks, the Chinese news media concentrated on the lethal weapons such as fire bombs, petrol bombs, bricks and home-made anchors ("Recording truth in Hong Kong," 2019). Without the protesters' explanation of what they were using the weapons for, the gear that the two Chinese news media emphasized showed that the protesters aimed the weapons to attack, thereby proving their point that the protesters were ruthless mobs who planned to destroy Hong Kong.

In addition, the two Chinese news media also cast the protesters as irrational, illogical and ungrateful, which laid the foundation for explaining why they were fooled by radicals and foreign forces. Some articles reposted by *Pengpai* depicted the protesters as people who misspelled their slogans, repeated themselves, lacked logic while expressing their points of view and had superficial expression skills (Chai, 2019). For example, one of the ring leaders, Nathan Law, was attending Yale University while other protesters were on strike and wasting that academic year (Hong, 2019). Further, these protesters were also accused of burning the very store they used for medical supplies (Chai, 2019). All the

details the Chinese news media provided showed the audience a group of unintelligent protesters, who were easily deceived by smarter radicals and foreign forces.

In sum, the discourse that the two Chinese news media constructed of their domestic protesters shows the protesters were the antagonists of the country. The discourse of the protesters that the Chinese news media constructed generated no sympathy, but rather, hatred among their audience. The protesters, rather than being portrayed as people who fight for their basic rights, were shown as “traitors” who conspired with Western forces in order to overthrow the government, destroy Hong Kong, break the “one country, two system” policy and ultimately used Hong Kong to threaten China.

When it comes to the overseas protests, the discourse that the two Chinese news media constructed of the protesters is a bit more positive than the discourse of the domestic protesters. In comparison with the HK protesters whose reasons for protesting were delegitimize and negated, the BLM protesters’ reasons for protesting were legitimized. However, instead of reporting from the protesters’ perspective—like the two U.S. newspapers did while covering the overseas protest—the two Chinese news media chose to focus on reporting the clashes between the protesters and the police, and the damages of protesting.

Differently from how the participants in the Hong Kong protest were portrayed, the people who participated in the BLM protest were constructed as members of the general public instead of radicals. This can be seen as *The GT* used the Chinese word “民众”, the public (Hu et al., 2020). Furthermore, in contrast to its coverage of the domestic HK protest,

where the general public was portrayed as supporting the law and the government and only few radicals protested, the two Chinese news media reported on the size of the protest to show the amount of people who demonstrated against racial injustice and repeatedly emphasized people's dissatisfaction with the situation and the U.S. government. For example, *The GT* depicted that on Monday, hundreds of thousands of protesters gathered at Times Square in Manhattan, New York, then marched toward Washington Square Park (Hu et al., 2020). Also, in a *GT* commentary, a Chinese professor in international relations wrote that the repressive approach that the U.S. government used to contain the protest generated more dissatisfaction and more chaos (Li, 2020).

In terms of the names that the two Chinese news media used to call people who participated in the demonstration, protester (“抗议者”) is the most commonly used. Nonetheless, in occasional cases, *The GT* also used the word mob (“暴徒”) when referring to protesters (Liu & Xu, 2020). The frequent usage of the word “protesters” when referring to BLM demonstrators did not delegitimize and demonize the demonstrators in the first place. However, the occasional usage of the word “mob” reflected the tone that the two Chinese news media used to portray the BLM protesters was negative as well.

Nevertheless, the reasons why the protesters were protesting were often clearly defined by the two Chinese news media. Both *The GT* and *Pengpai* explained that people on the streets were protesting racial injustice and police brutality; their actions were spurred by the death of George Floyd (Liu & Xu, 2020). However, *The GT* did not seem to be satisfied with the fact that this was the reason that led to the occurrence of the protest,

especially when the protests started to turn violent. It was trying to provide its own alternative explanation to the occurrence of violent protests without giving voice to any of the protesters, experts or credible sources in the U.S. In one of its articles, it reported how protests looked in three different cities in the U.S.: Minneapolis, Washington D.C. and New York. Its reporters in Minneapolis claimed that because the U.S. was in the middle of the pandemic, many people lost their jobs, and Black people were heavily affected. Their nerves had been tightened for months, and this case involving police brutality was just a flash point, which suddenly gave them a place to pour out their emotions (Hu et al., 2020). Even though no articles denied the fact that the protesters fought against police brutality and racial injustice, the alternative reason *The GT* provided covered up the real purpose of people's protest, which implicitly delegitimize the demonstrators' reasons for protesting.

In regards to the discourse of the BLM protesters and their actions, despite the fact that the two Chinese news media attempted to understand the situation from the protesters' perspective in several cases, the protesters were usually cast in a negative light. In the same article where *The GT* provided the alternative reason for the protest, the journalist in Washington D.C. wrote that while she was observing the protest, she felt the anger of the protesters. She described that a sign that was held by a Black mom grabbed her attention. The Black mom was in silence, holding a sign and walking around the protesting scene over and over again. The sign said Black moms need to breathe (Hu et al., 2020). The description of words written on the sign would generate sympathy from any reader. Without even giving voice to the protesters, readers could imagine how nervous Black moms were while their children were outside, as they needed to hold their breath.

However, even though in a few cases the articles provided their audience a chance to learn the protesters' perspective from journalists' observations, the reporters gave no voice to the protesters, which left their understanding of the protests at the observation level. Furthermore, the two news media were more likely to focus on reporting the clashes between the protesters and the police. Also, they constructed the protesters' actions as unacceptable and insane. For example, one of *The GT*'s articles depicted that the clashes between the police and protesters were intense. The protesters were throwing stones and bottles at the police, and the police were fighting back by firing tear gas and pepper spray (Liu & Xu, 2020). Moreover, the article described that the protesters were setting a building on fire. Then, at the time that the firefighters came, the protesters prevented the firefighters from putting the fire out in an unbelievable manner. The word "unbelievable" or in Chinese, "竟然" indicates the protesters' actions seem ridiculous to *The GT*, as the word is only used when unexpected things take place. Nonetheless, this is not the only time that the protesters' actions are described as unacceptable (Liu & Xu, 2020). In another case, the protesters were throwing stones at the police. *The GT* used the word "even" to describe the protesters' actions, which also proves *The GT* found the protesters' actions unacceptable (Liu & Xu, 2020). For *Pengpai*, portraying the chaotic scenes was more important than concentrating on what the protesters were doing, as the leads described the looting and burning scenes in passive voices and without attributing the scenes to anybody (Nan, 2020).

To sum up, in comparison to the discourse that the Chinese news media constructed of their domestic protesters, the discourse of overseas protesters was constructed as having

more legitimate reasons for protesting. However, unlike the discourses that the two U.S. newspapers constructed of the BLM protesters, the discourse that the two Chinese news media constructed did not change over the three selected time points, as they had only one or two stories on the protests in Oregon and Wisconsin, and their main focus was still on chaos rather than the protesters. Furthermore, while the discourse of the HK protesters might only generate hatred from the general public, in occasional cases, the discourse of the BLM protesters might generate sympathy. However, the protesters' actions in both the protests were portrayed as insane and crazy and leading to severe destruction.

Overall, when it comes to the discourse that the chosen U.S. and Chinese news media constructed of their domestic protesters, the two U.S. newspapers used more than a single tone to construct the news discourses about domestic BLM protesters. When constructing the news discourse, both newspapers used a sympathetic tone to present the reasons why domestic protesters were protesting. Occasionally, they gave voice to protesters, which allowed the readers to understand the demonstration from the protesters' points of view. Then, they used a neutral tone to label the protesters, but a negative tone to portray the destruction caused by the demonstrators. This can be seen in their emphasis on the clashes between the demonstrators and the police, the protesters' blockade of roads, the burning of buildings and the ransacking of stores. Also, following the depiction of these actions, the two newspapers usually gave voice to people who suggested violent actions would not help the protesting outcome and called for peaceful actions. When constituting the editorial discourse about the protesters, the tone the two newspapers used mirrored their political ideology. The conservative *WSJ* used a very antipathetic tone to depict the

protesters by calling the protesters rioters or agitators and focused on the damage and destruction they brought. The liberal *NYT* used a dominantly sympathetic tone to present the demonstrators by explaining why protesters demonstrate violently and emphasizing how their peaceful actions were harshly commented on and blamed by others. Therefore, for the two U.S. newspapers, when constructing the discourse of protesters in their own country, the protesters had legitimate reasons for protesting, but their violent behaviors should be halted.

In contrast, in terms of the two Chinese news media's construction of discourse of their protesters, the demonstrators were constructed as the antagonists of the country who were trying to conspire with foreign forces to overthrow the Hong Kong government. Their reasons for protesting for the abolishment of the extradition law were delegitimized by the two news media. They are also portrayed as radicals who only aimed to destroy Hong Kong. Thus, the two Chinese news media's construction of the discourse of their domestic protesters was completely negative. None of their actions were portrayed as acceptable.

In connection with the discourse that the selected U.S. and Chinese news media constructed of the overseas protesters, both of them cast a more positive light on demonstrations that took place in foreign countries, respectively. The two U.S. newspapers portrayed the HK protesters as those who bravely fought for their basic rights despite the brutal suppression from the police in both their news and editorial discourse. Moreover, although the protesters' violent actions were also portrayed as unacceptable in several cases in the editorial pieces, their actions were also backed up with demonstrators' apologies and further explanation. In addition, the protesters were given a voice to indicate that protesting

violently is the only way the politicians would listen. Thus, in creating the discourse of foreign protesters, the two U.S. newspapers emphasized the protesters' purpose in protesting, and the destruction was less of a concern.

The two Chinese news media also portrayed the BLM protesters more positively than their domestic protesters. The BLM protesters were constructed as having more legitimate reasons for protesting. In some cases, the news articles also tried to depict the situation from the protesters' perspective. However, the protesters' violent actions were not backed up with further explanation and were still described as insane by the two Chinese news outlets. In sum, as the overseas protesters' demonstration did not contain anti-Chinese government sentiments, the two Chinese news media clearly described the reasons for their protests. In addition, in this case of overseas protest, it is okay to generate sympathy for the protesters, which explained the cases when they depicted the situation from the protesters' perspective. Nonetheless, no matter where the protest took place, destruction was not acceptable by the two Chinese news media, which explained why the protesters' actions were still cast in a negative light.

The U.S. News Media: Discourse of the Police, National Guard, Federal Agents and Political Leaders

Moving to the opposite side of the protests, this section explores the news and editorial discourses the chosen U.S. news media and the discourse the selected Chinese news media constructed of the police, National Guard, federal agents and political leaders.

While constructing the news discourse of the police in the BLM protest, both *The NYT* and *The WSJ* depicted the scene of former police officer Derek Chauvin kneeling on the neck of George Floyd as highly disturbing (Benner & Badger, 2020). Also, *The WSJ* gave voice to the former chief of police in Houston who indicated that Chauvin's action was inappropriate, which reaffirmed and increased the credibility of the fact that Chauvin's action was highly troubling (Ailworth et al., 2020).

During the protest, the police were also depicted as brutal but at the same time were described as not doing enough to protect businesses, making the mistake of failing to communicate with the protesters, and giving up the precinct. As cases in point, one of *The NYT*'s articles stated that "[in] some cities, the authorities appeared to fire rubber bullets and other projectiles with little or no provocation" ("America Braces for Another Night," 2020, para.7). Also, in Atlanta, two police officers were "using stun guns on two Black college students and then dragging them out of their car" ("America Braces for Another Night," 2020, para.10). However, while the police were blamed for being violent, both *The NYT* and *The WSJ* news articles suggested that the police were not doing enough to protect businesses. For example,

Santamaria blamed police for Floyd's death and said they had not done enough to protect businesses in the aftermath.

"We were calling 911 and we were calling the Police Department, and there was no response," she said. She did not want officers to resort to violence against protesters, she said, but "they can't just not come and leave us to burn, either." (*The New York Times*, "Please, I Don't Have Insurance: Business Plead with Protesters," May 31, 2020).

In addition, *The NYT* also mentioned that the police made the mistake of failing to communicate with the demonstrators prior to the occurrence of the violent protest and

giving up the precinct. By quoting the Minnesota state senator Patricia Torres, *The NYT* explained that

...when peaceful demonstrators marched from the scene of Mr. Floyd's arrest to the Third Precinct, demanding action. They [Protesters] were met by police officers installing concrete barricades.

“The message was very clear: We are preparing for a fight with you, we are not preparing for a conversation in order to address the problem that we have in front of us,” she said. “Their reception triggered a lot of anger in our community. From there on, it deteriorated by the hour.”

(*The New York Times*, “Officer Charged With Murder as Minneapolis Calls for Calm,” May 30, 2020)

Furthermore, their abandonment of the police precinct was being pointed out as a mistake as well. *The NYT* gave voice to a veteran of the Minneapolis police force who illustrated that “losing [the police precinct] could be compared to losing your flag in war,” which indicated the seriousness of losing the police precinct (Macfarquhar et al., 2020. para. 23).

Despite the two newspapers’ negative portrayal of the police, in one or two cases, *The NYT* also gave voice to the police in order to look at the situation from their perspective and *The WSJ* even somewhat presented that the police were having an active and positive interaction with Floyd by quoting the criminal complaint. In one article, *The NYT* described that

...the city's police force has found itself criticized on all sides. At first they were lambasted for the volleys of tear gas and rubber bullets that left demonstrators dazed, bruised and angry. Then the police were denounced for excessive restraint, taking the unusual decision to abandon a police station to protesters who quickly torched it.

(*The New York Times*, “Officer Charged With Murder as Minneapolis Calls for Calm,” May 30, 2020)

Such depiction gave the readers a chance to learn the tough situation the police were in when taking these actions. Then, in the article written by *The WSJ*, it described that

The criminal complaint filed Friday states that Mr. Floyd initially resisted arrest but complied with officers after he was handcuffed. He sat on a sidewalk for a few minutes, and Officer Thomas Lane asked him if he was "on anything," according to the complaint. When the officers helped Mr. Floyd get up and attempted to put him into a squad car, he said he was claustrophobic, complained that he couldn't breathe and fell onto the pavement, according to the complaint. The officers eventually got him into the car, and then took him back out, when he again fell to the pavement.

(*The Wall Street Journal*, "Ex-Officer Charged in Floyd Death -- Demise of black man pinned at the neck by police in Minneapolis sparked outcry, unrest," May 30, 2020)

In this description, positive verbs such as "helped" and "attempted" were used to report the actions carried out by the police, which implies that the police were doing active actions to respond to Floyd's case. In comparison, negative verbs such as "complained" were used to delineate Floyd's actions. The usage of constructive verbs to portray the police actions might somewhat prevent a generation of negative feelings from the audience, as the police were portrayed as doing proper things such as helping when they encountered a situation like Floyd's case.

In terms of the editorial discourse that *The NYT* and *The WSJ* constituted of domestic police in the BLM protest, positive, sympathetic and negative tones all were used in *The WSJ*'s editorial discourse, but only a negative tone was used in *The NYT*'s editorial discourse.

On the one hand, *The WSJ*'s editorial discourse presented the police as a major force to combat chaos and victims who were attacked by the protesters. On the other hand, similar to the news discourse, the opinion pieces also accused the police of not doing enough to protect business.

Rioters say they want justice for Mr. Blake, but instead of waiting on the judicial system they laid siege to the Kenosha County Courthouse, used fireworks as weapons, and attacked police.

This is what happens when people think they have a license to commit violence. It's also why deploying enough force, by police or the National Guard, is essential to restore order and prevent more death and destruction.

(*The Wall Street Journal*, "The Fires of Kenosha," August 27, 2020)

As the piece not only victimized the police, but also suggested they are the force to secure safety, readers are likely to have a favorable feeling about the police. However, another opinion piece published by *The WSJ*, cast the police in a negative light. It commented that

Minneapolis police have similarly taken a hands-off approach to this week's rioting, which has destroyed roughly 130 local businesses, but the anger shows no sign of letting up. Downtown business owners -- even those who stand against police brutality -- have been fighting off looters with their bare hands. Some have taken up arms in defense of their establishments

(*The Wall Street Journal*, "Cross Country: Twin Cities Cops Stand and Watch as Buildings Burn," May 30, 2020)

The phrases "hands-off approach" and "with their bare hands" all imply that the police did little to protect small business, which led the business owners to protect their property themselves. Despite the fact that *The WSJ*'s negative editorial discourse about the police was constructed by accusing the police of not doing enough to protect citizens' property, the antipathetic editorial discourse *The NYT* constituted of the police focused on police brutality and how the legal system excused police from justice prosecution. As a case in point:

police officers who brutalize or even kill other people while wearing a badge so seldom end up facing any consequences is an ugly reminder of how unjust America's legal system can be.

...too many bad cops go unpunished for policing their fellow citizens in ways that often leave them abused or dead.

With the next George Floyd just a bad cop away, one hopes the other justices will be moved to ratchet back qualified immunity to circumstances in which it is truly warranted. When bad cops escape justice and trust between the police and the community shatters, it isn't just civilians who suffer the consequences, it's the good cops, too.

(*The New York Times*, “How Cops Get Away with Murders,” May 30, 2020)

The NYT’s piece not merely cast a negative light on the police by pointing out how they abused and mistreated people of color and their fellow citizens, but by leading the readers to realize an urgent need to bring justice to people who were mistreated by the police.

As for the news discourse that *The NYT* and *The WSJ* construct of the National Guard and federal agents, it shows both similarities and differences. While *The NYT* and *The WSJ* used a neutral and negative tone to portray the demonstrators in the May and August protests, they constructed the National Guards as a team that helped the city to restore order. This can be seen in *The NYT*’s quotation from Tim Walz, the governor of Minnesota, in which Walz acknowledged that the public had lost their trust in the police, but he urged people to see the National Guard as people who restore order (“Fire Burns in Minneapolis,” 2020).

However, as the news discourses they constructed of the protesters in Portland are divergent, there are obvious differences between the news discourses that *The NYT* and *The WSJ* constructed of the federal agents. Under the discourse that *The NYT* constructed, the federal agents were brutal, exceeding their authority, violating the demonstrators’ rights, conducting unnecessary actions and generating more protests and dissatisfaction after their arrival. For example, *The NYT* depicted that “federal agents...arrived in July, reports soon emerged that they had forcefully pulled people into unmarked vehicles, injured protesters and deployed tear gas” (Giulia McDonnell Nieto, 2020, para. 17). These series of actions show the brutality of the agents and a violation of the protesters’ right to protest. In another article, *The NYT* portrayed that by “the time the security forces halted their advance, the federal courthouse they had sent to protect was out of sight—two blocks behind them”

(Baker et al. 2020, para. 3). The phrase “two blocks behind them” implies the federal agents were overly using their force, their actions exceeded what they were expected to do, such as protecting the building at a reasonable distance. Moreover, the actions of agents in Portland generated criticism from a law professor from American University. He suggested that “if the federal troops are starting to wander the streets, they appear to be crossing the line into general policing, which is outside their powers” (Baker et al. 2020, para. 21). The comment from the professor indicated that the federal agents’ actions were exceeding their authority.

In contrast, in the discourse that *The WSJ* constructed of federal agents, the dispatching of federal agents generated controversy, but their actions were legitimate. As a case in point, a news article told the story that the arrival of federal agents generated controversy from the local politicians such as the mayor, Ted Wheeler. However, its articles also described that the agents were “uniformed agents to... confront protesters...combat violent crime” (Seib, 2020, para.4). The phrases “confront protesters” and “combat violent crime” legitimized the reasons why they were in Portland as well as casting a positive light on the agents. In spite of the absence of *The NYT*’s editorials of the protest in Portland, a commentary from *The WSJ* showed similarities to the news discourse that *The WSJ* constructed. The author delineated that agents were “to guard the federal courthouse, which rioters had attempted to set on fire” (McGurn, 2020, para.6). The verb “protect” not only legitimizes the agents’ actions, but also shows the effects of deploying the agents.

Then, when it comes to the news discourse that the two newspapers constructed of the president, both newspapers revealed that former president Trump glorified violence, as both reported on the tweet that Trump posted “when the looting starts, the shooting starts” (Purnell & Restuccia, 2020; Baker, 2020). Additionally, *The NYT* constructed Trump as not being aware of what kind of authority he possessed, by pointing out the fact that he lacked the authority to label antifa as a terrorist group. *The NYT* also constructed the discourse of Trump as inciting more violence and failing to stop anger. It told the story that Trump was threatening the protesters with the use of force, which was basically using violence against violence (Haberman, 2020). Moreover, Trump was also portrayed as someone who consistently admires suppressive governments. *The NYT* supported this by pointing out he was praising the “power of strength” in the Chinese government’s crackdown on demonstrators in Tiananmen Square (Haberman & Burns, 2020, para. 30).

Nevertheless, the editorial discourse *The NYT* and *The WSJ* commentaries constructed of President Trump are quite divergent. While *The NYT* portrayed Trump as a president who lies, who was irresponsible, who does not care about his citizens and crises at home but blames Democrats as responsible for the chaos, *The WSJ* presented Trump as a president who was doing the right things and cleaning up the mess that Democrats left, and expressed concern that Trump might be blamed by Democrats. *The NYT*’s commentaries stated:

Trump resembles that doughnut machine in the Centerburg, Ohio, luncheonette, unable to stop lies from coming out of his pursed mouth at giddy velocity. There is a hole in the middle of everything the president says.
(*The New York Times*, “President Trump Is a Doughnut,” May 30, 2020)

Over the last week, America reeled from 100,000 pandemic deaths, 40 million people out of work and cities in flames over a brutal police killing of a subdued black man. But Mr. Trump was on the attack against China, the World Health Organization, Big Tech, former President Barack Obama, a cable television host and the mayor of a riot-torn city.

(*The New York Times*, “President Needles as America Burns,” May 31, 2020)

In comparison, the opinion pieces published by *The WSJ* constituted a distinctive discourse about President Trump. It commented that

Because President Trump believes such concerns aren't America's business, he has been reluctant to involve U.S. troops abroad. So it's surprising that he now appears eager to intervene in the mostly Democratic-run American cities that have been wracked by chaos, shootings and destruction in the weeks since George Floyd's death at the hands of Minneapolis police.

The danger is that, even with clear legal justification, if he sends federal officers to do a job local law enforcement should be doing, and does it against the wishes of local mayors and governors, under the Pottery Barn rule he will quickly be blamed for problems he did not create even as he relieves those who did create them of any responsibility.

(*The Wall Street Journal*, “Main Street: Portland's Pottery Barn Rule,” July 21, 2020)

The distinctive editorial discourse about President Trump not only reflected the political leaning of the two newspapers, but the characteristics of American journalism field, which journalists and columnists have the rights to report and comment freely about the president.

In essence, the news discourse that the two U.S. newspapers constructed of the police, National Guard and federal agents in the BLM protest suggested that they were not only maintaining order, but also being brutal and making different mistakes that generated criticism from the general public. The news discourse of the president suggested that Trump is a president who glorifies violence. The editorial discourses share similarities to the news discourses, but what they presented and commented used a stronger tone and

added a new perspective to the news discourses and echoed the newspapers' political ideology. *The NYT*'s editorial discourse only used a more antipathetic tone to construct the police and the president. In its commentaries, the police were constituted as officers who mistreated their fellow citizens and used their badges to escape prosecution. The president was portrayed as an irresponsible liar who does not care about the crises in his country. In contrast, *The WSJ*'s editorial discourse constituted the police both more positively by portraying them as order maintainers as well as victims and more negatively by pointing out the police were not doing enough to protect small businesses. Furthermore, it used a more positive tone to delineate President Trump as a responsible president who is willing to clean up the mess that was left by Democrats. Nonetheless, these positive discourses were rarely spotted in the two U.S. newspapers' portrayal of the overseas HK police.

In terms of the HK protest, the two newspapers used a more unfavorable tone to constitute the news discourse about the police. The HK police were portrayed as treating the protesters violently and ruthlessly, and being allies with the Chinese Central government. Their brutal treatment of the protesters generated more demonstrations. As for the political leaders, the two newspapers constructed the news discourse of the executive chief of Hong Kong, Carrie Lam, as being the puppet of the Chinese Central government, Xi as a tough, ruthless and authoritarian political leader, and President Trump as a global leader who did not do enough to assist the pro-democracy protesters.

To show the brutality of the police, *The NYT* made references to the Tiananmen crackdown. For instance:

Riot police officers fired tear gas and rubber bullets in downtown Hong Kong on Wednesday as they repelled tens of thousands of protesters who tried to swarm the city's legislature in anger over proposed legislation that would allow extraditions to mainland China...The riot police responded by firing rubber bullets, beanbag rounds and tear-gas canisters at the protesters... The police also fired rubber bullets into the crowd for the first time in decades, and wounded a driver for a radio station with a shot in the eye.

(*The New York Times*, “Escalation of Violence Underscores Anger and the Police's Resolve,” June 13, 2019)

The police's actions -- firing tear gas, rubber bullets, beanbag rounds and tear-gas canisters at the protesters -- all show the police were being violent and brutal. Furthermore, “for the first time in decades” implies that the tactic of firing rubber bullets was not only rarely used in Hong Kong, but also shows how cruel the HK police were in this protest. Then, the wounded civilians also reaffirmed that the fact of police brutality.

Later on, in another article, *The NYT* reported a scene where the police besieged a university campus and prevented the parents of the protesters from going inside to find their children. It wrote that the “police offered protesters one way out of a besieged campus, raining down tear gas and rubber bullets on those who attempted to flee. But some escaped on rope ladders, as anxious parents sobbed near the police cordon” (Yu et al., 2020, para. 1). The phrase “raining down” again indicated the large amount of tear gas the police fired, which in turn reflected the brutal actions they carried out. The anxious parents who cried near the police cordon reflected the ruthlessness of the police, as they still carried on their brutal actions towards the protesters and showed no sympathy to the parents who were concerned about their children.

Furthermore, the two newspapers mentioned that the police were closely connected with the Chinese Central government. *The NYT*'s interview with a political science

professor shows a clear connection between the police and the Chinese Central government.

The professor explained that

yesterday's escalation of violence and repression on the part of police, I think it's a consequence of the very clear stance from Beijing that they are unconditionally behind the police and are relying on them to quell the protests in Hong Kong.
(*The New York Times*, Protests Halt Many Flights At a Major Air Travel Hub, August 13, 2019)

Based on the news discourse that the two U.S. newspapers constructed, the tough actions carried out by the HK police generated more demonstrations. This can be seen in one of *The WSJ*'s stories, "[the] disruption came after thousands of people descended on the arrival and departure halls to protest the police's handling of long-running demonstrations in the city" (Hufford et al., 2020, para. 3). The description indicated that even though the protesters led to the disruption, they protested against how the police were handling the demonstration. The police was the one who should be responsible for the disruptive protest. A second example can also be seen in *The WSJ*'s story of the HK protest explaining that in "the past two months, the momentum of the protest has in part been sustained by public reaction to police use of force against street demonstrators" (Khan et al., 2020, para. 18).

The editorial discourse that *The NYT* and *The WSJ* constructed painted a similar picture of the HK police. Although in one case, an editorial from *The NYT* depicted the police as doing self-defense, the two newspapers still constituted the police as being cruel and closely connected with the mainland Chinese government. For example, two of *The WSJ* commentaries depicted that

Police in helmets and often thick, black jackets beat protesters with batons and dragged them to police wagons.

(*The Wall Street Journal*, “Does Hong Kong Matter?,” August 15, 2019)

All they [Hong Kongers] ask is for China to leave them alone too. But now what do they see? Their own Hong Kong police, in riot gear, using batons and tear gas and pepper spray on protesters. This may be routine for police in mainland Chinese cities. But it has not been routine in Hong Kong.

(*The Wall Street Journal*, “Main Street: China's Million New Dissidents,” June 11, 2019)

As for the political leaders, both the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Carrie Lam, and the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, were cast in a negative light. The two newspapers both constructed Xi as a tough and authoritarian leader by portraying him as making and implementing hard-line decision and policies (e.g. Daniel & May, 2019). Lam was portrayed by *The NYT* as the chief executive that was hand-picked by Beijing. *The WSJ* depicted Lam also as a pro-China leader. Both “hand-picked” and “pro-China” suggest her close relationship with Beijing (Bradsher, 2019; Lyons et.al, 2019). Because Xi was delineated as an authoritarian leader, the depiction of Lam’s close connection with Beijing automatically cast her in a negative light.

Apart from the political leaders in Hong Kong and mainland China, the two newspapers also mentioned President Trump’s actions in response to the HK protest and the passage of the Hong Kong Rights Bill by Congress. A relatively negative light was cast on Trump by *The NYT*, but a positive light was cast on the bill. Both *The NYT* and *The WSJ* reported that Trump urged China to handle the situation humanely before reaching a trade deal with the U.S. (Daniel, 2019; Hanninger, 2019). Nonetheless, *The NYT* went a step further to accuse Trump of not listening to his conservative advisers and showing little sympathy with the pro-democracy protesters. It depicted that while former National

Security Advisor John Bolton and the State Department used tough language to warn the Chinese Central Government not to brutally intervene in the Hong Kong situation, President Trump was still praising Chinese President Xi Jinping by saying he had a lot of confidence in Xi, and if Xi met with the protest leaders, “things could be worked out pretty easily” (Crowley & Wong, 2019). As for the bill, both *The NYT* and *The WSJ* suggested it formally shows American support (Duehren, 2019; Wong, 2019).

When it comes to the editorial discourse that the two newspapers constructed about the political leaders, both of the newspapers used a stronger tone to depict Lam as the puppet of the Chinese Central government, Xi as a ruthless authoritarian leader and Trump as not doing enough to intervene the situation in Hong Kong. In the commentaries, both *The NYT* and *The WSJ* presented Lam as not listening to her public’s demands but Beijing’s orders. A columnist, William McGurn (2019, para.4) wrote that “China has been moving the goal posts on Hong Kong's freedoms ever since laying its hands on the territory in 1997. Ms. Lam has now shown the world that the interests her government serves aren't Hong Kong's but Beijing's.” Another editorial from *The WSJ* explained why Lam needs to serve Beijing’s interest

She was appointed by Beijing and takes her orders accordingly. She is insisting on moving ahead with the law despite the mass protests because China has demanded it. Her job, and perhaps her own future freedom, would be jeopardized if she dared to resist.

(*The Wall Street Journal*, “Why Hong Kong Matters,” June 14, 2019).

As Lam is in close connection to Beijing, the Chinese president Xi was also mentioned in the commentaries. Other than portraying him as an authoritarian leader, the commentaries

also constructed him as a leader who does not understand the idea of protesting. For instance, opinion pieces from both *The NYT* and *The WSJ* commented that

Chinese President Xi Jinping has tightened his political grip on the state-owned companies listed in Hong Kong.

They know that if Xi Jinping merely nods his head, they're going to be crushed.
(*The Wall Street Journal*, "Does Hong Kong Matter?," August 15, 2019)

It is doubtful that Xi Jinping, the authoritarian Chinese leader, understands the resistance or the longing

(*The New York Times*, "Hong Kong Protests: How Does This End?," November 17, 2019)

In addition, President Trump was mentioned in *The NYT* and *The WSJ* opinion pieces. Unlike the positive editorial discourse that *The WSJ* constructed of President Trump during the domestic BLM protest, opinion pieces that were published by both newspapers indicated that President Trump is supposed to do more to assist the protesters. As cases in point,

Hong Kong's cause should be the free world's, which is why Mr. Trump's failure to speak against a Chinese crackdown is inexplicable

(*The Wall Street Journal*, "The Hong Kong Stakes for Trump," August 14, 2019)

President Trump, who has so far limited his reaction to saying, "Everyone should be calm and safe," should join with Britain and other allies in insisting that China honor Hong Kong's special status, and in making clear that any use of armed force to crush dissent would lead to stern and certain sanctions.

(*The New York Times*, "Hong Kong's Defiance of Mr. Xi's Rule," August 15, 2019)

To sum up, the two U.S. newspapers did not cast a positive light on either the police or the political leaders in the case of the HK protest. Nonetheless, for the domestic police, federal agents and National Guard in the BLM protest, even though the two U.S. newspapers constructed them as being brutal, exceeding their authority, and violating the demonstrators' rights, they were also depicted as maintaining and restoring order in both

news and editorial discourses. Moreover, despite the fact that the police were constructed as making a lot of mistakes, in several cases, the newspapers still gave voice to the police and tried to help readers understand the tough situations they were in. Additionally, *The WSJ*'s editorial discourse even portrayed the police as victims who were attacked by the protesters. In terms of the overseas police, the two U.S. newspapers dominantly constructed the police as the antagonists in the protest and as closely connected and supported by the Chinese Central government, who treated pro-democracy protesters and their family members brutally and ruthlessly. In rare cases, the police were given a voice, while both political leaders and the police were depicted critically. Former President Donald Trump was constructed as producing only a negative impact on the situation in the U.S. in *The NYT* and *The WSJ*'s news discourse, but depicted as doing the right thing in *The WSJ*'s editorial discourse. Then, in the case of Hong Kong, Trump was depicted as showing little sympathy to the HK protesters in both newspapers' news and editorial discourses. Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Carrie Lam, was constructed as being the puppet of the Chinese Central government who did not listen to the demands of her own people.

The Chinese News Media: Discourse of the Police and Political Leaders

In contrast to the discourse that the two U.S. newspapers constructed of domestic police in the BLM protest, the two Chinese news media constructed a very positive discourse of China's domestic police. In their coverage, the police were depicted not only as heroes but also as victims. Instead of portraying the police's actions as being violent, the Chinese news media described their actions as restrained and taken in self-defense. In

addition, despite an indication of the police's restraint, the two news media presented its work as being effective.

While reporting on the demonstration at the airport, *The GT* delineated that the “radicals” were preventing the two mainland men who were beaten by the protesters from being treated, and it was the police who risked their lives to save these two men from the “radicals” (“Criticize Violence Against Journalist,” 2019). The phrase and word “risk their lives” and “save” reflected that the Hong Kong police was heroized in the discourse the Chinese news media constructed.

Moreover, the police were depicted as victims of the protesters. Both *The GT* and *Pengpai* frequently reported on how many police officers were hurt by the protesters. For example, one of the articles reposted by *Pengpai* illustrated that more than 10 police officers were harmed, some were being hit by hard objects. One officer's finger was bitten off by a “radical” (“Recording truth in Hong Kong,” 2019). Being hurt by protesters is strong evidence that the police were victims. Additionally, another article that was reposted by *Pengpai* revealed diaries that were written by the police. In that article, one of the police officers shared the feeling of having acid poured on him by protesters. He told the readers how many surgeries he had received and the painful feeling after the surgery. Also, some police shared how many hours they worked and how worried their family members were (Li, 2019). As the stories were told from their perspective, their experience not only shows that they are the victims, but also generates readers' sympathy.

When it comes to portraying the violent actions the police conducted, the two Chinese news media gave two explanations: first, the police were defending themselves as

“radicals” used life-threatening tactics; second, the “radicals” caused the police to employ violent actions. The self-defense explanation can be seen in one of *The GT*’s articles. The article portrayed that many protesters used iron sticks, wood boards and bricks to attack the police’s line of defense. Because the situation was life-threatening and the police needed to protect the legislature, they used proper force (Ye, 2019). Compared with the argument that *The NYT* made, that rubber bullets had not been used in Hong Kong for decades, *The GT* gave voice to the police who indicated that they were restraining the force they used and emphasized that the weapons they used were non-lethal, and were commonly used by other countries (Bai et al., 2019). The word “life-threatening” and the phrases “protect the legislature” and “used by other countries” all legitimate actions carried out by the police. In particular, the phrase “used by other countries” suggests that if other countries used it, so we can use it.

The Chinese news media stated that the reason protesters trapped the police was to use violent actions. As they claimed that the protesters were carrying out a Hong Kong-version color revolution, they explained that hunting police was a commonly used strategy in the revolution. One of the publications that was reposted by *Pengpai* narrated that the “radicals” used tactics such as “forcing, insulting and rebuking,” to “attract” the police to use force, and then recorded the part where the police used force and posted it online to generate anger (“Antiviolence is the appeal,” 2019). The explanation the two Chinese news media provided of why police were being violent could help direct the blame to protesters, as they were the one who “intentionally” incited police’s actions.

In addition, when constructing the discourse of the police, the two Chinese news media also emphasized the “achievement” of the police. For example, one of *The GT*’s stories mentioned that the police in plain clothes arrested 15 core radicals (Zhao et al., 2019). By showing the result, the two Chinese news media might try to show that the police were not weak as they were portrayed as trying to use the force restrainedly.

As for political leaders, the two state-run Chinese news media illustrated that the Chinese Central government is confident in the Chief Executive Carrie Lam, and they firmly support the actions carried out by Lam. Then, rather than focusing on Lam, the two news media spent a lot of time covering the speech made by President Xi in Brazil regarding the protest and situation in Hong Kong. They described that Hong Kongers believed that Xi’s speech not only cheered them up, but also gave an effective warning to the “radicals”(“Speech of Xi,” 2019). Nevertheless, politicians who supported the bills passed by Congress were portrayed thoroughly negatively. An opinion piece published by *The GT* suggested that the comments made by some politicians in the U.S. were gentle, as they only called for the Chinese government to handle the situation calmly and hoped the issues could be solved. However, it accused House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of being extremist and having little knowledge about the situation in Hong Kong, but shared her shallow understanding. It described her comment on Hong Kong as a reflection of the quality of American politicians (“Clickbait American Politicians,” 2019).

In addition, it said that they believed that there are two types of people in Congress. One type does not understand what extradition law is about. They just followed what other politicians said, as portraying China negatively is politically correct in the U.S. The other

type of politicians understand the extradition law. However, they pretended that they did not understand, and their aim was instigating violent actions and creating chaos in Hong Kong. They were clickbait, who used sensational and exaggerated headlines to attract people's attention. Also, they were ignorant, selfish, evil and unethical. They used their rights to sway public opinion and bend the truth, which in turn, deceived the public ("Clickbait American Politicians," 2019). The comment made by *The GT* regarding American politicians reflected the tense relations between the U.S. and China. The sentence "portraying China negatively is politically correct" not only delegitimated U.S. discourse about the HK protest but also pushed the American politicians to the rival side, as it implied that China did not do anything wrong; it was criticized by American political officials only because depicting China negatively in the U.S. is the right thing to do. Moreover, *The GT's* comment supported the reason the two Chinese news media provided for why the HK protest took place, as it implied that the American politicians' narrations and comments were untrustworthy by portraying them as ignorant and unethical people who only intended to create chaos in Hong Kong.

The two Chinese news media cast a negative light on American police and political leaders involved in the BLM protest as well. Although *The GT* and *Pengpai* did mention that the police in the BLM protest maintained order in occasional cases, they mainly constructed the police as not only being brutal to protesters but also being derelict of their duty.

The two Chinese news media indicated that police brutality is a long-existing issue in the U.S. *The GT* provided data showing that 1004 people died under the police guns in

2019 (Mu, 2020). Furthermore, in their coverage of the BLM protest specifically, the topic of police brutality was brought up again. They depicted that the police pushed a 75-year-old man down to the ground, arrested a journalist who was live on TV, and suppressed the protesters by using rubber bullets and smoke bombs, which generated more anger from the public (Nan, 2020; Xiao et al., 2020).

While accusing the police of being brutal, the Chinese news media also implied that the police did not do enough to protect businesses and were too restrained to control the situation. A journalist of *The GT* reported that they found that the police were being too restrained to contain looting, which they thought was affirmed by Governor Andrew Cuomo (Hu et al., 2020). Another article published by *Pengpai* illustrated that a supermarket in Minneapolis was looted, but the police did not intervene (Nan, 2020). The statement suggested that the police were supposed to stop such an action, but they did not, which indicated that they were derelict of their duty.

Then, as former President Trump took a tough stance on China, when constructing the discourse of the political leader, the Chinese news media used *The NYT*, *CNN* and other American news media's commentary as sources to accuse President Trump of glorifying violence and using force against his own citizens (Zhang et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, even though the two Chinese news media portrayed President Trump as glorifying violence and accused the American police of being cruel by referencing the U.S. news media's comments, some of their own articles were written from the U.S. government's perspective. *The GT* drew an analogy between the situation in Minneapolis and protest scenes in the 1960s that were presented in the movie *Detroit*. Then, it described

the scenes in the movie. It depicted that in the most segregated state of Alabama, Black people started to demonstrate in April 1963, and their protests for civil rights forced the government to accept their requests. Under the huge pressure from the civil rights movements, the U.S. Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Wang, 2020). The usage of the word “force” suggests that *The GT* did not depict the Civil Rights Movement positively and somewhat reported the situation from the U.S. government’s perspective, as the word indicates that *The GT* thinks that the U.S. government was reluctant to pass the act. Otherwise, a more optimistic sentence, such as their protest enlightening the U.S. Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act, might be used. In another case, when a *GT* journalist depicted President Trump’s plan of dispatching the military to quell the protest without referencing the U.S. news coverage, s/he wrote that President Trump addressed the nation in response to the demonstration and claimed that he planned to use military force to stop the unrest. Trump’s choice to use force reminded people of the serious unrest in 1968 and that Richard Nixon’s “law and order” campaign won him the White House. However, in Trump’s case, there was a huge question mark of whether he would be successful (Hu et al., 2020). From the journalist’s depiction, we can see his or her focus was on whether Trump would carry out the same action as successfully as his predecessor Richard Nixon, rather than whether Trump’s threat of using force against his own people would be ethical. It somewhat implies that using military force against one’s own people is less of a concern and even acceptable to the Chinese journalist.

These two cases suggest that even though they described the situation in the U.S., the two state-run Chinese news media still occasionally portrayed the situation from the government's perspective. Also, they reflected some of the features of the Chinese government and the cultural differences between the U.S. and China. As an authoritarian country, protests in mainland China are not commonly seen. According to the Law of the People's Republic China on Assemblies, Processions and Demonstrations (1992), the demonstrations are only legal when people's requests for protesting are approved by local police stations. Additionally, anti-government protests and demonstrations that aim for dividing China are prohibited. Thus, it is possible that people in China might have different understanding of what protests mean and stand for, and they prefer law and order more than democracy. Therefore, to prevent enlightening their own citizens to carry out demonstrations, it is likely that the Chinese news media would not cast a positive light on protesters in any country.

To sum up, when the two state-run Chinese news media constructed the discourse of domestic police and political officials, a completely positive light was cast on them. The police in Hong Kong were constructed as heroes who used restrained but effective force to combat the chaos and "radicals." The political leader's speech was constructed as encouraging and functional. However, when the two Chinese news media constructed the discourse of overseas police and political officials, a dominantly negative light was cast on them. The police in the U.S. were not only constructed as being brutal, but also accused of not doing enough to protect businesses. The U.S. politicians were constructed as glorifying

violence in the case of the BLM protest and being ignorant, unethical and untrustworthy in the case of the HK protest.

Overall, in terms of the discourses that the U.S. and Chinese constructed about the domestic police and political officials, the two U.S. newspapers, as the watchdog of the government, neutrally depicted their domestic police, National Guard and federal agents, and negatively presented the president in their news discourse. Even though the police, the National Guard, and the federal agents were portrayed as being brutal, exceeding their authority, and violating the demonstrators' rights, they were also depicted as restoring and maintaining order, and as stuck in a tough position to carry out proper actions. But the president was presented as producing only a negative impact on the situation in the two newspaper's news discourse. In comparison, the two Chinese news media, as the mouthpiece of the government, positively construct the discourse of both their police and their president. The Hong Kong police were presented as heroes who used restrained but effective tactics to fight against the chaos and "radicals." A simple speech made by President Xi was portrayed as encouraging and powerful.

Then, as regards the discourse that the U.S. and Chinese news media constructed of the overseas police and political leaders, both the U.S. and Chinese news media presented the police and political leaders in the other country negatively. While constructing both the news and editorial discourses, the two U.S. newspapers portrayed the Hong Kong police as the antagonists in the protest, closely connected to and supported by the Chinese Central government, treating pro-democracy protesters and their family

members brutally and ruthlessly. Moreover, they depicted the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Carrie Lam, as being the puppet of the Chinese Central government. Then, move to the Chinese news media side, the two news outlets also presented the U.S. police and politicians negatively. They constructed the police in the U.S. as being brutal and not doing enough to protect businesses, President Trump as a president whose own people and media disliked the work he had done regarding the BLM protest, and described other politicians who support for passing the Hong Kong bills as untrustworthy, uneducated and unethical.

The discourse analysis of the U.S. and Chinese news coverage of their domestic and overseas protests not only reaffirms the findings of previous studies but adds a new perspective. In line with earlier research, when constructing the discourse of the protests that took place in opposing countries, the two U.S. newspapers *The NYT* and *The WSJ* constructed a dominantly positive discourse about the protesters in Hong Kong, but a totally negative discourse about the police. However, the two Chinese news media *The GT* and *Pengpai's* discourse about the protest that took place in the U.S. presents a different aspect. Although the two Chinese media also depicted the police and political officials in the U.S. completely negatively, they did not cast a positive light on overseas protesters. Their negative portrayal of the BLM protesters suggested that the people who showed the United States--China's rival--had racial issues and brought destruction and chaos to the country were not appreciated by the two Chinese news media, which breaks the ancient proverb that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." In addition, it appears to suggest that

as an authoritarian country, it is possible that the Chinese news media might not cast positive light on any protesters to prevent its own residents from demonstrating.

The negative discourse of BLM protesters in Chinese media also raises the question of the portrayal of America and Americans in general. National identity as it emerges from the two protests' coverage is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Constructing National Images in U.S. and Chinese News Discourses of Foreign Protests

The occurrence of a large-scale domestic protest often requires a country to improve its national image abroad (Davenport, 2009; Loh, 2016), as an enhanced image could create a more favorable place for tourism, international trade, the international job market, and international relations (Anholt, 2008). International news media play an indispensable role in constructing the national image of other countries. The image that the mass media constitute could sway public opinion of the country, in turn impacting foreign policies regarding the country (Dell’Orto, 2013). Furthermore, the national image that states form of one another through mass media mirrors how they interact with one another and what expectations they have in their relations (Dell’Orto, 2013).

This chapter explores the national images that the U.S. newspapers *The New York Times* (NYT) and *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) constructed of China in their coverage of the Hong Kong (HK) protest, and the national images that the Chinese news media *The Global Times* and *Pengpai* constructed of the U.S. in their coverage of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest. As previously mentioned, because news articles and editorial pieces in U.S. news organizations are written by two groups of employees and with different rules and practices with different rules and practices, this chapter will also explore the news and editorial discourses that the two U.S. newspapers constructed of China separately.

The U.S. Newspapers’ Construction of the National Image of China

As discussed in the previous chapter, the main discourse of the HK protest was that demonstrators who fought to prevent their basic rights from being taken by the Chinese

Central government were treated brutally by the police, who were closely connected to the mainland government. Within the news discourse that the two U.S. newspapers constructed of the HK protest, the first portion of the Chinese national image was that of an undemocratic country with an opaque judicial system, which citizens in a democratic society do not trust and where they fear erosion of their basic rights. This was reflected in both *The NYT's* and *The WSJ's* explanation of why Hong Kongers protested against the legislation of the revision of extradition law:

Critics contend that the legislation would allow virtually anyone in the city to be picked up and detained in mainland China, where judges must follow the orders of the Communist Party. They fear the new law would target not just criminal suspects but political activists as well...The mass demonstration was one of the largest in the city's history and a stunning display of rising fear and anger over the erosion of the civil liberties that have long set this former British colony apart from the rest of the country.

(*The New York Times*, "Thousands Flood Hong Kong Streets as Debate Halts on Disputed Bill," June 12, 2019)

Critics said the proposed law could be abused to target political dissidents and would expose citizens to the mainland's more opaque legal system, where detainees could be unfairly jailed and abused.

(*The Wall Street Journal*, "Hong Kong Protesters Defy Beijing," June 10, 2019)

The NYT's explanation that "judges must follow the orders of the Communist Party" implies that the orders of the Communist Party are troubling. This implication is backed up by people's fear of losing their civil liberties and political dissenters' concern of being treated unfairly under the Chinese legal system. The sentence "civil liberties that have long set this former British colony apart from the rest of the country" suggests that Hong Kong, a former British colony, is a democratic society in contrast to mainland China, an undemocratic country that lacks civil liberties.

This portion of the image was reaffirmed in the editorial discourse that the two newspapers constructed. A columnist from one of the two newspapers commented and explained that

Hong Kong's freedoms are a standing irritant to the Communist authorities in Beijing, who have not ceased chipping away at them.

The extradition measure was initially presented as needed to send a Hong Kong man to Taiwan, where he allegedly killed his girlfriend. But to the democracy-minded people of Hong Kong, this was only cover for a portion of the bill that would also allow extradition to mainland China, which would enable Chinese authorities to pry political foes from Hong Kong by leveling false accusations and demanding their extradition.

(*The New York Times*, "Hong Kong Protests Are About Rights," June 11, 2019)

The phrase "a standing irritant" in the sentence "Hong Kong's freedoms are a standing irritant to the Communist authorities in Beijing" implies that freedoms do not exist in mainland China. The phrase "democracy-minded people of Hong Kong" seems to add to this fact, as people such as mainland authorities who are not democracy-minded might not be concerned about the erosion of their freedom.

Along with the image of an undemocratic country, the two U.S. newspapers also depicted China as an untrustworthy, tough, ruthless and frightening authoritarian country that has no freedom of expression but many human rights issues, and whose news media disseminated misinformation regarding the HK protest to sway public opinion in China in their news and editorial discourses. Then, by emphasizing the Chinese news media's manipulation of public opinion, the two U.S. newspapers also presented China as a country that suppresses opposite trustworthy viewpoints.

An opinion piece published by *The WSJ* that explained the reasons why Hong Kongers protested reflected several of these points. The piece stated that

The demonstrators -- and the million Hong Kongers who marched peacefully Sunday -- object specifically to a pending law that would allow extradition from the territory to the Mainland. The people know this will put anyone who criticizes China in jeopardy of being sent to the Mainland for almost certain conviction and punishment. Hong Kong's legacy of British law will still control -- except in cases where China decides otherwise.

(*The Wall Street Journal*, "Why Hong Kong Matters," June 14, 2019)

The phrases "put anyone who criticizes China in jeopardy" and "certain conviction and punishment" not only suggest that mainland China has little tolerance of political dissent, but show its cruelty and fearfulness, as people who said unwanted content would be punished by the Chinese government.

Then, move from the editorial discourse to the news discourse, *The NYT* and *The WSJ* painted the image of the untrustworthiness of China in two aspects: breaking the promise to the arrangement of Hong Kong by meddling in the city's own issue, and manipulating media narratives about the protest to sway public opinion. Both *The NYT* and *The WSJ* pointed out that the Chinese government promised to maintain Hong Kongers' freedoms, Hong Kong's legal system and the city's high degree of autonomy for 50 years under a policy called "one country, two systems," when Britain returned Hong Kong to China in 1997. However, Beijing was gradually taking the Hong Kongers' special rights away. *The NYT* cited the report from the State Department to prove its point:

...the most recent Hong Kong Policy Act Report by the State Department in March, which reported an increased "tempo of mainland central government intervention in Hong Kong affairs -- and actions by the Hong Kong government consistent with mainland direction." Despite this, the report concluded that Hong Kong continued to have a sufficient degree of autonomy.

(*The New York Times*, "Businesses That Depend on Base to Invest in China Are Rattled," June 13, 2019)

The WSJ not only provided concrete examples but also explained why Beijing is gradually taking Hong Kongers' rights away:

Beijing now has a much tighter grip on the city and has increasingly moved to silence opposition voices.

Anger at the proposal has reinvigorated public opposition to Beijing that had dwindled after 2014, when authorities faced down a pro-democracy movement that occupied streets for 79 days in the central business district. Since then, Beijing's room for dissent has shrunk as the government has jailed protesters, declared a pro-independence political party illegal and expelled a foreign journalist.

"Cultural misunderstanding between the Hong Kong Chinese and the mainland Chinese is one of the issues that has not allowed us to build trust," said Christine Loh, a former lawmaker and undersecretary of the environment. Beijing is more direct now. Its officials regularly summon local politicians and business leaders to meetings at the Communist Party's local headquarters
(*The Wall Street Journal*, "Hong Kong Protesters Defy Beijing," June 9, 2019)

Summoning local officials and business leaders directly, jailing protesters, expelling a foreign journalist and silencing opposition all suggested that Beijing was meddling with Hong Kong's internal affairs, taking locals' freedom of expression away and breaking its promise to uphold the city's high degree of autonomy and Hong Kongers' rights, which in turn showed its untrustworthiness. In addition, such actions also reflected that China is a country that has no freedom of speech, as it is intolerant and tough on dissent and opposition. These perceptions can also be seen in *The NYT* and *The WSJ*'s portrayal of the president of China, Xi Jinping. An anthropologist at the Chinese University of Hong Kong who was interviewed by *The NYT* elucidated that "it is clear that since Xi got in power, China has been moving further and further away from all ideas of liberal democracy." Moreover, both newspapers directly pointed out that Xi has taken an "uncompromising position" toward "dissent in Hong Kong -- and elsewhere in China."

The concern about freedom of speech is linked to a bigger issue in China that was shown in the national image presented by *The NYT* and *The WSJ* in their news discourse – the human rights issue of how the Chinese government brutally quell political dissent. As explained in the previous chapter, the two U.S. newspapers mentioned the firm support and the close connection between the HK police and the Chinese central government. Such a relationship between the HK police and the Chinese government led the two newspapers to call the brutal actions taken by the police a “Tiananmen 2.0.” The reference to the Tiananmen protest in 1989 is enough to remind readers of human rights issues in China, as the demonstration led to a cruel military crackdown, which caused numerous students to lose their lives. In addition to the Tiananmen crackdown, the Xinjiang situation was also mentioned by both newspapers to illustrate the human rights problem. As one of *The NYT*’s articles revealed, “China’s harsh crackdown on Uighurs and other Muslim minorities in the nominally autonomous western region of Xinjiang has added to a grim sense of foreboding among many young people in Hong Kong.” The reference to Xinjiang reaffirmed the image that China has a long-standing human rights issue.

In addition, the human rights issue in China was backed up by the story of a former employee of Britain’s Hong Kong consulate who was arrested and tortured by mainland police. As illustrated by *The WSJ*, the “Chinese secret police beat him [the former U.K. staffer], deprived him of sleep and chained him spread-eagled as they pressed him for information about activists leading the pro-democracy protests.” The description “secret police” creates not only a mysterious sense but also a scary feeling. The verbs “beat,” “deprive,” “chain,” and “press” all show the cruel actions taken by the police in mainland

China. Also, those verbs are an indication that the Chinese police turned a blind eye to basic human rights.

Moving back to the national image of the untrustworthiness of China, the second aspect of the untrustworthiness was reflected via *The NYT* and *The WSJ*'s portrayal of the state-run Chinese news media's coverage of the HK protest. In many cases, *The NYT* or *The WSJ* introduced the Chinese news media as "party-controlled" or "propaganda outlets." Then, they often quoted or translated how the Chinese news media portrayed the reasons why the protest took place and their mention of the U.S. However, such quotations were generally followed by professors' comments on the statement or interviews with the protesters who suggested completely different things from the statement. As a case in point:

...the party-controlled news media has accused opponents of the legislation of acting as stooges for foreign enemies trying to foment disorder and humiliate and weaken China. "The radical opposition in Hong Kong is not seeking the greater good of all of Hong Kong society, but instead is being driven by selfish political interests to gang up with foreign forces hostile to mainland China," *Global Times*, a widely read nationalist news outlet, said in an editorial.

"What little the Chinese public knows of the developments in Hong Kong is largely filtered and framed by the Chinese media to minimize the risk that demands for political freedom spread across the border into mainland China," said Jessica Chen Weiss, an associate professor at Cornell University who studies Chinese foreign policy and public opinion.

(*The New York Times*, "Hong Kong Crisis May Harden Xi's Resolve to Squelch Dissent," June 13, 2019)

Without indicating the accuracy of the statement, the adjective "party-controlled" might already make the audience skeptical about what *The Global Times* reported. In addition, the source *The NYT* interviewed is an expert who worked at a prestigious university and conducted research in the most related field to the situation in Hong Kong, which shows

the reader a much higher level of credibility than a party-controlled news media. Thus, when the professor indicated that the information regarding the protest that the Chinese public consumed from the state-run news media was largely filtered, this was sufficient to show that the narrations used by the state-run Chinese news media are untrustworthy.

The untrustworthiness of Chinese state-run news media was also shown in the two newspapers' editorial discourse. In several cases, the columnists of the two newspapers directly pointed out what was wrong in what the Chinese news media reported. For example, one article stated that

And if we are to believe the press in mainland China, that vast throng was really "some Hong Kong residents" who had been "hoodwinked by the opposition camp and their foreign allies" into opposing the legislation, to cite the version in China Daily, an organ of the Chinese Communist Party.

No, Ms. Lam and editors of China Daily, the people of Hong Kong were not "hoodwinked," nor did they misunderstand this legislation.

They understand very clearly that the measure making its way through the local legislature, where pro-Beijing deputies hold sway, has nothing to do with bringing murderers to justice, and everything to do with breaking down the firewall between Hong Kong's rule of law and mainland China's thoroughly politicized judicial system.

(*The New York Times*, "Hong Kong Protests Are About Rights," June 11, 2019)

Explaining that the protesters understand what they were demonstrating against and that what the political officials and the state-run Chinese news media reported were wrong is enough to show that the narratives provided by the Chinese news media were not trustworthy.

Additionally, a commentary from *The NYT* specially analyzed the content of state-run Chinese news media's articles, and their aim of using a particular narrative also shows

the untrustworthiness of the Chinese news media. In the article, the author also pointed out that the Chinese news media disseminated misinformation:

After weeks of asserting that the unrest had been orchestrated by foreign "black hands," Chinese officials on Monday accused protesters of showing the first signs of "terrorism." Such messaging is key to Beijing's public opinion operation, which has been turned up to full volume.

The weapons of this information war include a flood of social media posts from state-run media, some carrying misinformation. When a woman dispensing first aid was shot in the eye by the Hong Kong police, the state-run CCTV reported on its official social media account that she had been shot by protesters. It also accused her of handing out money to demonstrators.

Ten weeks ago, when Hong Kongers first took to the streets to protest disputed extradition legislation, Beijing censored all reports of this civil unrest. But in recent days, it has reveled in posting video of protesters purportedly using air guns, slingshots and petrol bombs against the police. The state-run Global Times has described protesters as "nothing more than street thugs who want Hong Kong to 'go to hell,'" or as people who had "voluntarily stripped themselves of their national identity." Such descriptions are aimed at delegitimizing the protesters' cause, especially among educated mainlanders who might otherwise be sympathetic. (*The New York Times*, "The Other Battle for Hong Kong," August 13, 2019)

The author's analysis of the purpose of the Chinese news media's usage of narrations such as influencing Beijing's public opinion or delegitimizing the protesters' cause, and providing evidence of what the Chinese news media described as misinformation all suggested that the state-run Chinese news media's reporting is not trustworthy. Moreover, because these news media are state-run, the content they publish is treated as representing the Chinese government's point of view. Therefore, since the content published by the state-run news media is presented as untrustworthy, the Chinese government and also China might automatically be regarded as untrustworthy.

The national image of China that *The NYT* and *The WSJ* formed pointed to its booming economy, but the two newspapers also suggested economic strength has become

a powerful tool for China to restrain foreign companies from taking stances and a threat to the U.S. Both newspapers mentioned that China's economy grew significantly over the last decades and became the world's second-largest economy. Nevertheless, the two newspapers also pointed out that big corporations who run business in Hong Kong or mainland China were afraid to take a stance in the case of the HK protest, as they were concerned it would offend mainland China, "which could seriously affect their ability to operate." Moreover, several companies changed their policy or released their apology statements, as the Chinese government regarded their stances as troubling or Chinese customers were irritated by their products. For example:

Under pressure from Beijing, Cathay Pacific Airways threatened Monday to punish or fire staffers "who support or participate" in protests, and on Tuesday the airline's majority shareholder Swire Pacific said it would "resolutely support" Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam and police.

(The Wall Street Journal, "The Hong Kong Stakes for Trump," August 14, 2019)

The luxury brands Coach and Givenchy joined Versace on Monday in apologizing to China for producing T-shirts that were regarded to have undermined the country's sovereignty. The apparel, which identified the semiautonomous regions of Hong Kong and Macau as countries, set off an angry online backlash from Chinese consumers who perceived the designs as violations of the "One China" policy.

(The New York Times, "Luxury Brands Apologize to China After T-Shirt Flap," August 13, 2019)

These two examples indicated the impacts that China's booming economy produced on international corporations. Furthermore, the growth of China's economy was seen as a threat to the U.S., as an analysis piece published by *The NYT* pointed out:

[In] his almost-singular focus on his showdown with Beijing over trade and tariffs, Mr. Trump is ignoring the view of his conservative advisers, who believe that China's authoritarian model threatens American interests worldwide.

An official national security strategy that the Trump White House released in December 2017 declared Beijing to be a strategic competitor whose political system must be confronted along with its economic and military strength.

(*The New York Times*, “A Rare Western Voice With Little Sympathy for a Pro-Democracy Effort,” August 16, 2019)

Lastly, the two U.S. newspapers also constructed the national image of China as a country whose leaders do not understand the situation of protesting and have no trust in their own citizens. A commentary published by *The NYT* indicated that:

It is doubtful that Xi Jinping, the authoritarian Chinese leader, understands the resistance or the longing. Those who rise to the pinnacle of a secretive, authoritarian, coercive system like China's are molded to believe that you can control all the people all the time, if you can only find the right combination of sticks, carrots, lies and information filters. To them, any dissent must be a political plot hatched in dark foreign corners.

(*The New York Times*, “Hong Kong Protest: How Does This End?,” Nov, 17, 2019)

Another *NYT*'s article pointed to censorship in China to suggest the country do not trust its citizens:

The Hong Kong authorities are responding by tracking the protesters in the digital places where they plan their moves, suggesting they are taking cues from the ways China polices the internet. In mainland China, security forces track chat messages, arrest dissidents before protests even occur, and are increasingly detaining people over posts critical of the government.

“We know the government is using all kinds of data and trails to charge people later on,” said Lokman Tsui, a professor at the School of Journalism and Communication at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

“The bottom line is whether to trust Beijing,” said Dr. Tsui, the communications professor. “This is a government that routinely lies to its own citizens, that censors information, that doesn't trust its own citizens. You can't ask us to trust you if you don't trust us.”

(*The New York Times*, “App Used by Protesters Comes Under Assault,” June 14, 2019)

To sum up, the national image that the selected U.S. newspapers constructed of China in their news and editorial discourses is completely negative, but it is consistent with the

previous image that the U.S. news media constituted of China—an authoritarian country with human rights issues, an irresponsible trade partner, and a rising power with a booming economy (Lee, 2002; Yang & Liu, 2012; Zhang, 2015). Through the coverage of the HK protest, *The NYT* and *The WSJ* constructed China's national image by portraying it as an undemocratic country that has an opaque judicial system; whose leaders do not understand the situation of protesting, and whose citizens live in a democratic environment but are fearful of their rights being taken away. Also, the image presented a tough, ruthless and frightening authoritarian China that, on the one hand, should not be trusted by its citizens, and on the other hand, did not trust its citizens by using strict surveillance. Moreover, the booming economy has become a powerful tool for the Chinese government to restrain what foreign companies can do. Thus, it has become a threat to the United States.

The Chinese News Media's Construction of the U.S.

When it comes to the chosen Chinese news media's construction of the national image of the U.S. in their coverage of the BLM protest, *The Global Times* and *Pengpai* not only constitute a predominately negative discourse, but seem to retaliate against how the U.S. news media construct the Chinese image through their coverage of the HK protest.

Mike Bird, a journalist from *The WSJ*, once tweeted during the HK protest that “Police officer had his baton taken away from him and was attacked with it. Drew his pistol and aimed at protesters. Astonished nobody killed here tonight.” His tweet drew *The GT*'s attention, and *The GT* accused him of not presenting the full picture of the scene, agitating chaos and being cynical about an HK police officer who pointed a gun at the protesters (Fan et al., 2019). As *The GT* opposed *The WSJ*'s accusation of police brutality in the HK

protest, the former police officer Derek Chauvin's highly disturbing and cruel treatment of Mr. Floyd might be a suitable example of what the Chinese news media look for in order to fight back against the issues that the U.S. news media criticized mainland China and Hong Kong for having.

During the HK protest, *The NYT* and *The WSJ* pointed out the police brutality issue in Hong Kong and the human rights problem in mainland China. The selected Chinese news media, *The GT* and *Pengpai*, also identified the U.S. as having these problems in their coverage of the BLM protest. *The GT* indicated that the American police were the real cruel police by quoting an online comment posted by an American who said that more than 5,000 civilians were shot dead by American police since the Ferguson protest in 2014, and only 2 percent of the police officers involved were indicted; 0.4 percent of them were sentenced. Other than mentioning how many people were shot dead by the police and the police's ferocious actions towards the BLM protesters, *The GT* published an article titled "Police brutality issue, how deep the water is in the U.S." The metaphor "deep water" in Chinese signifies that affairs are not transparent, as the deeper the water is, the harder it is for people to see the bottom (Zhang et al., 2020). Instead of using a direct statement like *The NYT* or *The WSJ* to describe the Chinese legal system as opaque, *The GT* used a metaphor to imply that they think the policing system in the U.S. is nontransparent, and many things within the system are unknown. It also formed the national image of the U.S. as a country whose policing system is opaque.

The human rights issue is another topic that the two Chinese news media brought up in their coverage of the BLM protest. Both *The GT* and *Pengpai* reported on the statement

that was published by the United Nations' human rights chief, Michelle Bachelet. They mentioned that Bachelet criticized the U.S. for being structurally racist and warned the U.S. of its unprecedented actions of attacking more than 200 journalists from different countries. Also, the two news media stated that according to a reliable report that Bachelet quoted, the U.S. law enforcement officials' utilization of tear gas, rubber bullets and pepper spray is excessive usage of force against the protesters (Zhang et al., 2020). Furthermore, they raised the point that the European Union (EU), a U.S. ally, urged the U.S. to restrain their use of power against the protesters; Germany, the U.K. and Australia were concerned about the safety of their journalists who were harassed and attacked by the American police while covering the BLM protest (Zhang et al., 2020). Apart from quoting the comments from the allies of the U.S., *The GT* gave voice to Maria Zakharova, the spokeswoman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, who claimed that the U.S. has lost the right to accuse other countries of having human rights issues. She said it is time for the U.S. to reflect on the comments it made regarding situations in Hong Kong, Iran, Venezuela and other countries (Zhang et al., 2020). These examples are sufficient for the two Chinese news media to form the national image of the U.S. as a country that has human rights issues itself but still accuses other countries such as China and Russia of having these problems.

Accusing the United States of having human rights issues also allowed the two Chinese news media to portray the U.S. as having a double standard. The two Chinese news media presented the double-standard of the U.S. in two aspects: American politicians' comments on the HK protest and differential treatment of white and Black people by the

U.S. government and police. A commentary published by *The GT* titled “American government, please stand with the residents in Minnesota” (2020) stated that the political elites in the U.S. still deeply believe that their country handled human rights issue the best, even when their police officers’ abuse of power caused many people to lose their lives, and even when they had the highest rate of COVID-19 deaths around the world. Then, it revealed that at this time, the U.S. has faced the most serious human rights issue at home, but its politicians still focused on the Chinese government’s legislation of the national security law and worried that China “might invade” Hong Kongers’ human rights. Then, after mentioning the damage that the HK protesters brought, the article commented that even though the HK radicals led to such destruction, the U.S. government, Congress and the public still attacked the HK police for being cruel, praised the HK radicals’ violent behaviors as a beautiful scene, and encouraged them to demonstrate violently by saying the U.S. is standing with Hong Kongers. It seems that Washington gave all of its attention to HK radicals rather than people who protested in Minnesota. The politicians in Washington seemed to be more willing to stand with the HK radicals than their own people (“stand with Minnesota,” 2020).

Then, in another article by *The GT*, the point made in this commentary was backed up by their description of a Facebook post that was published by the wife of Singaporean prime minister Ho Ching. Based on *The GT*’s portrayal, the Facebook post was a cartoon that aimed to satirize the “well-known double standards” in the U.S. The cartoon presented two similar protest scenes. One scene was the HK protest, and the other was the BLM protest in Minnesota. The cartoon also showed a man who resembles President Trump. The

man regarded the protesters who “messed Hong Kong up” as a democracy but called the protesters in the U.S. thugs (Zhang et al., 2020).

Despite the fact that both reports presented examples that are sufficient for them to suggest that the U.S. has a double standard, the two Chinese news media still used the racial issue to support their point. A news report from *The GT* depicted a cartoon that was reposted online by Americans. The cartoon said the country has two systems. It stated that in the case of George Floyd, the police used force against him. In contrast, the police treated a white serial murder genially (Liu & Xu, 2020). In addition, the article described that the cartoon makes Americans realize that the police turned a blind eye to white protesters who demonstrated against lockdown, but they used tear gas to quell the BLM protesters as soon as they marched to the police station where the incidents took place. Furthermore, *Pengpai* described how two CNN journalists were treated differently by the police. It mentioned that a white female journalist was treated nicely and politely by the police. In contrast, a male Black journalist, Omar Jimenez, was arrested by the police during his live shot even though he showed his media credentials to the police (Nan, 2019).

The accusation of the U.S. having a double-standard raises questions about the trustworthiness of the U.S. *The GT* commented that the hypocritical political elites in the U.S. played the trick of a double-standard to such an extreme that they confused themselves. They calculated their profit clearly, but they could not distinguish among generally acknowledged truth, common sense, and public feelings, or understand the relationships among these three. They thought they could manipulate anything by calling a stag a horse around the world. They dreamed that by holding a globe they could control the whole world

(“stand with Minnesota,” 2020). This opinion piece from *The GT* not only echoes their comment of the American politicians as untrustworthy in their coverage of the HK protest, but presents them as arrogant.

Furthermore, the two Chinese news media’s construction of the U.S. as a country that has a double standard, and references to the HK protest, also indicate that they are trying to convey a message to the Chinese public that neither the mainland Chinese nor Hong Kong government did anything incorrectly regarding the handling of the HK protest. Instead, it is the U.S. that used a different standard to judge affairs that took place within China’s sphere.

Apart from constructing the U.S. as having a police brutality issue, a human rights problem and a double standard, the two Chinese news media also constructed the national image of the U.S. as a country that is chaotic and dangerous – that has a problem with gun violence and has failed to maintain order. Its society is racist and deeply divided; minorities and poor people are marginalized.

Both *The GT* and *Pengpai* focused on portraying the burning and looting protest scenes in their leads. One of *The GT*’s articles started by describing the scene as the fire blew into the sky; the bricks were flying; the protesters were taking advantage of the chaos to loot (Liu & Xu, 2020). *Pengpai*’s coverage showed a similar scene. It depicted that the protesters burned the precinct and ransacked the stores. Additionally, at least five buildings were also on fire around the precinct (Nan et al., 2020). The fire, bricks, and looting all presented the readers with a chaotic scene. Then, people’s reaction and feelings regarding the scene was added by a journalist from *The GT*, located in Minneapolis. S/he described

that s/he was panicking during the days that the protest took place. There was a night that s/he could not fall asleep as s/he was tracking the protesters' demonstrating route and preparing to evacuate at any time. S/he mentioned the closest looting scene s/he experienced was the grocery store under his/her apartment building. Then, the following day, the store was boarded up with plywood. Checking the protesters' demonstrating route also became part of his/her life within the protest week (Hu et al., 2020). The journalist's reaction to the protest not only reaffirmed the chaotic scene of the protest but added the feeling of fear, as s/he was prepared to evacuate at any time, implying that the building s/he lived in could be on fire at any time.

The image of the U.S. as chaotic and dangerous was reinforced by the two Chinese news media's quotations of Governor Tim Walz's Twitter posts and emphasis on the number of people who were shot. *The GT* and *Pengpai* quoted the tweets in which Governor Walz called the protest scene a battleground and warned people that the situation at night was extremely dangerous (Liu & Xu, 2020; Nan et al., 2020). Moreover, both newspapers reported on gunfire or how many people were shot. As cases in point, *Pengpai* mentioned that there were six or seven rounds of gunfire at the protest scene; people panicked after hearing gunshots. It also reported that a 19-year-old was shot dead during the protest in Detroit; a gunfight took place in Wisconsin where three people got hurt, and one person died (Nan, 2019).

In spite of their previous accusation of police brutality, the chaotic scenes portrayed by the two Chinese news media laid the foundation for them to construct the situations as out-of-control. In multiple news articles, *The GT* used the Chinese word “失控” to describe

the protest scene. The word literally means out-of-control. Moreover, *The GT* quoted Democratic pollster Jeff Horwitt of Hart Research Associates to reinforce its point: according to Horwitt, “one of the few things Americans can agree upon” is that America is “out of control” in 2020 (Zhang et al., 2020, para, 2).

The Chinese news media also constructed the national image of the U.S. as a country that is racist and deeply divided, a country that marginalizes minorities and poor people. In a story from *The GT*, the journalists stated that racism and unfair distribution of resources are long-existing problems in U.S. society. A large portion of the working class and homeless people are minorities. Also, the pandemic has impacted African Americans significantly, as 23 percent of Americans who died from Covid were African Americans, but they only make up 11 percent of the American population (Hu et al., 2020). Then, one of the two analysis pieces used the movie *Detroit* to inform the Chinese audience about how Black people were treated unfairly in the 1950s and 1960s. The other pieces pointed out that Black people have access to lower quality educational resources, which led them to know less than white people. Also, the article claimed that Black people are at the bottom of society. They do not have access to good medical care as whites. However, when the government was trying to reform and provide Black people with better sources, white people strongly opposed it as they thought the tax they paid would be wasted (Wang, 2020).

The point made in this analysis was reinforced by a commentary published by *The GT*. The authors wrote that American politicians from both parties did not condemn the racism issue intensely because they were afraid of losing white voters. Later on, the writers directly accused the U.S. of marginalizing minorities and poor people and claimed that the U.S. as a cold-blooded capitalist country did not serve minorities and poor people. Further,

they directed attention to China by saying that it is impossible for the U.S. to implement a poverty-relief policy like China and trying to show that China is better than the U.S. Then, in the end, they stated that party politics lead the U.S. to be deeply divided, and this divide limits and interrupts the general public from thinking independently. The public's point of view is determined by which party they support, which in turn, provides politicians the convenience and protection to further demolish the interest of the general public (“Marginalization in the U.S.,” 2020).

The discourse and national image that these three articles constructed of the U.S. and the American people depicted Black and white people as being in two completely opposite groups—whites who have better access to resources in the society are not willing to help the Blacks and do not care about the tough situations Black people are in. This can be seen through their portrayal of whites American as unwilling to use their tax money to help Blacks have access to the healthcare system and politicians as failing to condemn racism out of fear of losing their white voters. Moreover, under their description, the general public are people who lack independent thought, and American politicians are evil people who care more about their political goals than about poor and minority citizens. In the third commentary, their mention of China shows that they try to imply that China is better than the U.S. because they think China cares about their poor people.

Lastly, the two Chinese news media also constructed the national image of the U.S. as a country that has advanced military gear but is not willing to solve the problems in their society and that is decaying and losing its leading position on the world stage. An article from *The GT* specifically introduced who the National Guard is and what kind of

equipment they own. The article stated that even though the National Guard consists of citizens or nonprofessional soldiers, their military strength is powerful. They have almost all the equipment that the U.S. Army and Air Force have (Liang & Li, 2020). However, despite a positive portrayal of the National Guard, the two Chinese news media also construct the U.S. as a country that is not willing to solve its people's problems. As a case in point, *The GT* quoted a former chief of the Board of Police Commissioners. The chief claimed that the police reform plan he drafted has been left on the shelves for 5 years, and nothing has changed. The FBI also failed to keep its promise to follow up on the fatal shootings conducted by the police (Zhang et al., 2020).

Moreover, the two Chinese news media used comments from a German magazine and Deutsche Welle to imply that the U.S. was losing its position on the world stage. *The GT* described that the German news magazine commented that the U.S. used to be a model of crisis management, but now its status is shaky. Also, it stated that Deutsche Welle mentioned that the death of George Floyd shows that the "American dream" has now become an "American nightmare" (Xiao et al., 2020).

Overall, the two Chinese news media construct a predominantly negative national image of the U.S. Despite admiration for the advanced military gear of the U.S. National Guard, the U.S. was constructed as a country that has a double standard on police brutality and human rights issues. It has both problems itself, but it still criticized China for having these issues. Additionally, the U.S. was portrayed as a chaotic and dangerous country that has a gun violence problem; as a racist and deeply divided country that marginalizes

minorities and poor people; and ultimately as a country that is out of control and losing its position on the world stage.

In conclusion, as the U.S. and China are experiencing the tensest relationship since the normalization of their ties in 1979, the national images that these selected U.S. and Chinese news media constructed of each other are not merely negative, but also similar. *The NYT* and *The WSJ*'s coverage of the HK protest constituted China as an undemocratic and untrustworthy authoritarian country that has an opaque legal system and serious human rights issues with tolerating political dissent and allowing for freedom of speech. The two Chinese news media formed a similar national image of the U.S. in their coverage of the BLM protest. They constructed the U.S. as a cold-blooded capitalist country that had an opaque policing system and its own human rights issues of marginalizing minorities and poor people. They constructed the United States as a country that claimed to care about freedom of press, but arrested the journalists who covered the protest. Because American politicians were hypocritical, arrogant and have a double-standard, they failed to recognize these problems in their society.

Moreover, the national image that the selected U.S. and Chinese news media constructed of each other reflected not just the strained Sino-U.S. relations, but their competition for reputation and position as a world leader. This can be seen through news media in both countries pointing out that the other country's news coverage is untrustworthy, while its own news coverage presents a full picture of what happened. Furthermore, on the Chinese news media side, the two news outlets directly suggested that the U.S. has started to decay and has lost its leading position on the world stage. Also, they

proposed both implicitly and explicitly that China is better than the U.S. by accusing the U.S. of having a double standard and showing that China cares about their poor people but the U.S. does not. On the U.S. news media side, the two newspapers portray China as an authoritarian country that has various human-right issues, which implicitly suggests that China is not a qualified world leader. In addition, the fact that the U.S. is a democratic country that has freedom of speech and respects human rights is taken-for-granted knowledge, so a comparison between China and the U.S. is not even needed to suggest that the U.S. is better than China.

Chapter 6: Constructing Discourses of the HK and BLM Protests by Control News Media Group

As concluded in the previous chapters, the analysis of the selected U.S. and Chinese news discourses about their domestic protests and protests that took place in each other's country not only partly reaffirms the findings of earlier studies, but also reflects the conflicting relations between the U.S. and China. As the preceding research indicates, the overseas protesters are portrayed more positively (Kilgo et al., 2018) and the police are portrayed more negatively if the relations between the nations that the news media are located in and the nations where the protest took place are tense (Fang, 1994; Wittebols, 1996). In addition, the analysis in the previous chapters provides a new perspective, as the discourse about the overseas BLM protesters that the chosen Chinese news media constituted is also negative, which suggests that people who showed that the United States, China's rival, had racial issues and brought destruction and chaos to the country were not appreciated by the two Chinese news media. Also, it implies that other than international relations, a country's news discourse about protests might also mirror the country's cultural and racial background.

To further explore how national interests and international relations are reflected in the discourse that international news media construct about overseas protests, and in this case, the HK and BLM protests, this chapter analyzes the BBC's and *The Korean Times*' discourses about the two protests through the same time points that were used to analyze the chosen U.S. and Chinese news discourse of the HK and BLM protests. For the HK protest, the three time points were as follows: the initial protest during June 9-16, 2019;

the airport clash during August 13-16, 2019; and the college campus clash during November 17-21, 2019. For the BLM protest, the three time points were the initial protest for George Floyd during May 28-31, 2020; the protest in Portland during July 21-25, 2020; and the protest for Jacob Blake during August 25-27, 2020.

Unlike the current Sino-U.S. relations, neither the U.K. or South Korea have a tense relationship with either China or the U.S. In addition, the U.K. and South Korea shared some linguistic, geographical or cultural similarities with the U.S. and China, respectively, and similar types of protests took place in both the U.K. and South Korea. Thus, by focusing on the BBC's and *The Korean Times*' coverage of the two protests and using their coverage to form a control group, this chapter aims to find out how news media in countries that have no direct interest in the two protests and have no tense relations with either the U.S. or China form news discourses about the protesters, police and overseas political officials. Furthermore, this chapter not only compares the news discourses within the control group—comparing the BBC's discourse with *The Korean Times*' discourse—but also contrasts the control group's news discourse with the selected U.S. and Chinese news discourse about the HK and BLM protests to better understand how national interests and international relations are mirrored in the news discourse about the two protests.

Constructing News Discourse About the HK Protesters

Although both the BBC and *The Korean Times* provided enough evidence to show the legitimacy of the HK protest, the discourse they constructed about the protesters is more critical in comparison with the discourse that the U.S. newspapers *The NYT* and *The WSJ* constructed of the HK protesters. Nevertheless, their discourses are more positive than the

Chinese news media *The GT* and *Pengpai*'s discourse about the HK demonstrators, which seems to suggest that the U.S. and Chinese news coverage of the international protests are at least partly driven by a national identity narrative.

The two news media both labelled the demonstrators as the general public or protesters. However, at the initial stage of the HK protest, the BBC rarely used the word "pro-democracy" to describe the protesters until the demonstrators started to request more civil rights rather than withdrawal of the extradition law. Also, the neutral phrase "anti-government" was more commonly seen than the positive phrase "pro-democracy," as the BBC used a tag "Hong Kong anti-government protests" to categorize its coverage regarding the HK protest. Moreover, the initial reporting of the number of the protesters and the portrayal of the extradition law shows that the BBC was trying to maintain neutrality by covering both the protesters side and the police side. As cases in point, the BBC described the number of protesters as "[organisers] say there were one million people, which would make it the biggest march in more than 20 years. Police say there were 240,000 at its peak." And when it comes to the extradition law, it depicted that

Critics of the bill say those in the former British colony would be exposed to China's deeply flawed justice system, and it would lead to further erosion of the city's judicial independence.

But supporters say safeguards are in place to prevent anyone facing religious or political persecution from being extradited to mainland China, and that the proposal will plug loopholes.

(BBC, "Hong Kong Protesters Demonstrate Against Extradition Bill," June 9, 2019)

In contrast to *The NYT* and *The WSJ*'s emphasis on "one in seven residents," the BBC only helped the audience to interpret the number of demonstrators once among the analyzed

articles. Nonetheless, similar to the two U.S. newspapers, the BBC did emphasize that the protesters came from a variety of professions. For instance, it mentioned that “[m]ore than 100 businesses have said they will shut to allow their staff to protest and nearly 4,000 teachers said they would strike.” And in another case, it detailed that “in a mainly peaceful demonstration that included a wide range of people - from business people and lawyers to students, pro-democracy figures and religious groups.” Additionally, its depiction of the clashes between the protesters and the police, the destruction, the damage and the inconvenience brought by the protesters were more frequently seen than in the coverage by the two U.S. newspapers, and the protesters’ violent behaviors were not routinely legitimized or framed as the only way to get political leaders’ attention. For example, it reported that

Hong Kong has been in turmoil for weeks, with protesters causing chaos at the airport earlier this week.
(BBC, “Hong Kong Protests: Trump Urges Xi to Meet Demonstrators,” August 15, 2019)

While many of the demonstrations were peaceful, an increasing number have ended in violent clashes with police.

The latest protest, an "occupation" of the airport, led to hundreds of flights being cancelled after protesters escalated their action, though normal service has mostly resumed
(BBC, “China Describes Hong Kong Protests as 'Near Terrorism',” August 14, 2019)

Large fires broke out at entrances to the Polytechnic University (PolyU), where protesters hurled petrol bombs and shot arrows from behind barricades.

Officers earlier warned they could use live ammunition if protesters did not stop attacking them using such weapons.
(BBC, “Hong Kong: Protesters and police in fiery stand-off at university,” November 18, 2019)

However, despite the fact that the BBC used a less sympathetic tone to portray the HK protesters by focusing on reporting the clashes between the protesters and the police, and did not frequently explain the reasons why demonstrators conduct violent actions, its discourse of the protesters was still more positive than the discourse that the Chinese news media constructed about the protesters. The BBC clearly not only stated the reasons why people protested and their demands, but also gave voice to demonstrators to describe the tough situation they were in. Another article portrayed a protester as being brave. As cases in point:

"This is the end game for Hong Kong, it is a matter of life or death. That's why I come," Rocky Chang, a 59-year-old professor, told Reuters news agency.
(BBC, "Hong Kong Protesters Demonstrate Against Extradition Bill," June 9, 2019)

Although the government has now suspended the bill, demonstrators want it to be fully withdrawn.
(BBC, "Hong Kong Protests: Police Defend Use of 'Disguised' Officers," August 13, 2019)

"I have been trapped inside Polytechnic University for two days and food and water is running out," he said.
"Most people tried to get out of this hell-like place, most of them tried to escape but ended in failure, being arrested or wounded or something."
"I didn't expect this incident to get so desperate in here. The campus is so desperate and I am not well prepared. I would call it a disaster."
(BBC, "Hong Kong Polytechnic University: Protesters Still Inside as Standoff Continues," November 19, 2019)

Darkness had fallen. Crowds were thinning. A lone girl, in a meditative pose, defiantly sat in front of a row of riot police.
It has become an iconic image from the Hong Kong demonstrations.
"Bravery in the face of brutality. Beautiful," wrote an observer on Twitter.
(BBC, "Shield Girl: The Face of Hong Kong's Anti-Extradition Movement," June 15, 2019)

Learning the reasons why protesters demonstrated, the demands they made and the challenging situation they faced all allowed the audience to make sense of the situation

from the protesters' perspective, which in turn generated sympathy. Then, the story of the shield girl who sat in front of a line of police by herself to fight for abolition of the extradition law might have generated admiration. Therefore, even though the BBC used a less sympathetic tone to constitute the discourse about the protesters, its discourse still generated positive feelings.

The Korean Times' discourse about the HK protesters is similar to the BBC's discourse. In contrast to the discourse that the two U.S. newspapers constructed about the protesters, it also used a more critical tone, as the portrayal of destruction and interference that the protesters brought and the depiction of the police's injuries and point of views are more visible in its coverage. Nonetheless, its reference to the anti-government protests that took place in South Korea showed a different way from the two U.S. newspapers and the BBC to portray the protesters in Hong Kong to generate sympathy from readers.

Before delving into the discourse that *The Korean Times* constructed about the protesters, it is noteworthy that apart from *The Korean Times'* own coverage of the HK protest, it also reposted articles from the Associated Press (AP), Agence France-Presse (AFP), Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA), Reuters, Yonhap and *South China Morning Post* (SCMP)—an English-language newspaper operated in Hong Kong that still has independence of reporting.

In spite of general usage of the word "protesters," *The Korean Times* also utilized the phrase "Hong Kong residents" or "ordinary residents" to name the protesters, which more directly suggests that the general public were participating in the protest. Also, unlike the BBC that reported the difference in the number of protesters reported by the organizers

and the police, *The Korean Times* focused on the numbers that the organizers provided. In terms of the reasons why people in Hong Kong were protesting, *The Korean Times* not only reported that Hong Kongers worried that the legislation of the extradition law might allow the mainland Chinese government to further erode their basic rights, but also backed up the legitimacy of their protest by pointing out the concerns of international communities:

...from the International Chamber of Commerce to the EU Office to Hong Kong and Macau have voiced serious concerns with the bill.

The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission has also said that the extradition agreement could "pose significant risks to US national security and economic interests in the territory" and compromise Hong Kong's special trade status with the US.

(*The Korean Times*, "Hong Kong to rally against Chinese extradition agreement," June 9, 2019)

However, despite its depiction of the legitimacy of the protest, *The Korean Times* also tried to be impartial. Rather than giving voice to the supporters of the extradition law like the BBC did, *The Korean Times* maintained neutrality by pointing out the HK government's reaction:

The government has attempted to address criticism by reducing the number of crimes eligible for extradition as well as limiting them to a sentence of seven years or more in prison. It is also only applicable on a case by case basis.

(*The Korean Times*, "Hong Kong to rally against Chinese extradition agreement," June 9, 2019)

The details "limiting them to a sentence of seven years" and "a case by case basis" indicated that the concerns of the protesters might not become reality.

Then, as the protesters became increasingly violent, *The Korean Times* pointed out the clashes between the protesters and the police, the demonstrators' blockade of the road, and the damage. Also, it occasionally gives voice to the police to explain their actions.

Thousands of protesters angry at the Hong Kong government's contentious extradition bill have blocked streets around the Legislative Council complex on Wednesday, bringing parts of the city to a standstill.

Motorists have been forced to find other routes around Hong Kong, while trains were briefly prevented from stopping at the MTR station in Admiralty.
(*The Korean Times*, "Hong Kong protesters prepare for worst as riot police gather," June 12, 2019)

Protestors occupied the airport, leading to the disruption of one of the busiest airports in Asia following violent clashes with police over the weekend.
(*The Korean Times*, "Korean flights to Hong Kong back to normal," August 13, 2019)

Senior superintendent Kong Wing-cheung said protestors had blocked traffic and occupied Lung Wo Road, and also surrounded and damaged police vehicles and private cars in a nearby tunnel. Kong said force would be used if necessary to rescue people trapped in the cars.

"I reiterate that it is not a clearing operation," he said. "Our goal is to rescue those who are trapped."

(*The Korean Times*, "Hong Kong protesters prepare for worst as riot police gather," June 12, 2019)

Notwithstanding the negative impacts the protestors brought, like the two U.S. newspapers and the BBC did, *The Korean Times* also gave voice to demonstrators and let them share their demands, feelings and the reasons why they do certain actions.

...a female protester who arrived at 7am, said she wanted to come to the park after reading about the protest on social media on Tuesday night.

Asked what she hoped the protestors could achieve, she said: "The best scenario would be if officials retract the bill."

(*The Korean Times*, "Hong Kong Protesters Prepare for Worst as Riot Police Gather," June 12, 2019)

A 20-year-old protester, surnamed Cheng, had joined the march with five friends but lost contact with them in the melee. "I'm concerned about them and about myself," he said. "But I'm even more concerned about the extradition bill."

(*The Korean Times*, "Million-strong' march against Hong Kong's extradition bill," June 10, 2019)

Traffic in one of the busiest parts of the city remained blocked, however, and several hundred protesters seemed in no hurry to leave. The protesters said they hoped the blockade would lead to the measure being shelved.

(*The Korean Times*, “Hong Kong protesters vow to keep fighting extradition law,” June 13, 2019)

The portrayal of the protesters’ demands, concerns and reasons for blocking the roads all allow the audience to understand the situation from the protesters’ perspective.

Besides, differently from the BBC, *The Korean Times*, as a left-leaning news media, also generated sympathy for the protesters by mentioning how the Korean people support the HK protesters and making reference to the anti-government protests that took place in its country. The article illustrated that the images of the smoke-filled streets and the police who fired rubber bullets in Hong Kong remind Koreans of the candlelight protest in 2016, in which “police unleashed tear gas and water cannons at massive street protests against the now-ousted former President Park Geun-hye”, and the Gwangju uprising in the 1980s, in which the Korean military killed hundreds of protesters (Lee, 2019). Based on the article’s depiction, some Korean online users linked the HK protest to the Gwangju uprising by posting side-by-side images of demonstrators being beaten on the ground (Lee, 2019). Also, the article mentioned the tweets Koreans posted regarding the HK protest. A variety of these posts wished the HK protest would be like the candlelight protest rather than the Gwangju uprising (Lee, 2019), for example: “I keep hearing of [Hong Kong] citizens getting hurt and shot with rubber bullets. [The Hong Kong police] are keeping up with an 1980s Korean style of forcible dispersion” and “Let's hope Hong Kong does not end up like Gwangju 1980 but more like our 1987 June 10 democracy movement or the recent candlelight revolution.” The linkage of the Hong Kong protest with the candlelight

and Gwangju protests might generate sympathy from people who are aware of how demonstrators were treated in the two Korean protests.

To sum up, *The Korean Times* used a more critical tone than the two U.S. newspapers, *The NYT* and *The WSJ*, by portraying the clashes and damages instigated by the HK protesters more frequently. Nevertheless, it also used a more sympathetic tone than the BBC and a more positive portrayal than the two Chinese news media, *The GT* and *Pengpai*, to construct the discourse about the protesters, not only by giving voice to them but also by making connections to the protests that took place in Korea.

Constructing News Discourse About the BLM Protesters

Although the BBC and *The Korean Times* both indicated the legitimacy of the protest for George Floyd and against racial injustice, they also constructed a negative discourse about the BLM protesters, as they mainly relied on official sources and focused on portraying the confrontation between the protesters and the police, as well as the chaos, destruction and ransacking.

In comparison with the two U.S. newspapers, the discourse that the BBC constructed about the BLM protesters seems to be more negative. Despite its general usage of the word “protesters” to refer to the demonstrators, the BBC used the words “rioter” or “mob,” when paraphrasing former President Trump’s tweet that used the word “thugs.” Furthermore, in several cases, the BBC called the violent protest a “riot,” though the word was used mostly to paraphrase experts’ explanation of the protesting situation in the U.S. For example, the BBC wrote that “[in] the U.S., peaceful protests over police violence have escalated into widespread riots and looting”, “Prof Hunt says this week’s US riots are the

most serious ones since 1968 - after Martin Luther King was assassinated.” “Riot” or “rioters” are two words that the U.S. newspapers *The NYT* and *The WSJ* used sparingly. As mentioned in the previous chapter, *The NYT* only used the words with explanation, and *The WSJ* only utilized the words in commentary. If the words carry the same meaning in British English, it might be an indication that the BBC might construct a more critical discourse regarding the BLM protesters in the U.S.

Apart from the names, the BBC frequently described confrontations and scenes of destruction in its coverage of the BLM protest. As cases in point:

...demonstrators clashed with police, set police cars on fire, vandalised property or looted shops. The National Guard has activated 5,000 of its personnel across 15 states and Washington DC.
(BBC, “George Floyd death: Why do some protests turn violent?” May 31, 2020)

Numerous shops have been looted, including on the famous retail avenues, Melrose and Fairfax, while overhead footage showed fires burning. Earlier police fired rubber bullets and hit protesters with batons. Hundreds of arrests have been made.
(BBC, George Floyd death: Widespread unrest as curfews defied across US, May 31, 2020)

In Atlanta, a state of emergency was declared for some areas to protect people and property. Buildings were vandalised and a police vehicle was set alight as protesters gathered near the offices of news broadcaster CNN.

In New York's Brooklyn district, protesters clashed with police, throwing projectiles, starting fires and destroying police vehicles. A number of officers were injured and many arrests made.
(BBC, “George Floyd death: Clashes as protests spread across US,” May 30, 2020)

In addition, following the portrayal of confrontation and destruction, the BBC referenced politicians' harsher comments than the two U.S. newspapers, to either reaffirm the chaos or condemn the protesters' violent actions. For instance:

Minnesota's governor said the tragedy of the death of George Floyd in police custody had morphed into "something much different - wanton destruction"

Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms (Atlanta) issued a passionate plea, saying: "This is not a protest. This is not in the spirit of Martin Luther King Jr. You are disgracing our city. You are disgracing the life of George Floyd."
(BBC, "George Floyd death: Clashes as protests spread across US," May 30, 2020)

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot imposed a 21:00 to 06:00 curfew until further notice, saying she was "disgusted" by the violence.
(BBC, "George Floyd death: Widespread unrest as curfews defied across US," May 31, 2020)

The BBC's portrayal of the destruction, looting, and protesters-police confrontations as well as the quotations of the politicians' condemnation all formed a negative discourse about the BLM protesters. Moreover, it drew connections to a protest that took place in the U.K. in 2011, the England riot, in which protesters requested answers from the police over the fatal shooting of a Black man, Mark Duggan. The BBC wrote that:

Most of the protests began peacefully -- and several stayed peaceful. But in a large number of cases, demonstrators clashed with police, set police cars on fire, vandalised property or looted shops...

Experts have also drawn parallels with the 2011 England riots -- when a peaceful protest over a man who was shot dead by police turned into four days of unrest, with widespread looting and buildings set alight.
(BBC, "George Floyd death: Why do some protests turn violent?," May 31, 2020)

In contrast to *The Korean Times*' reference to the pro-democracy protests that took place in its country, which drew a connection to the similar brutal actions carried out by the police in both countries, the parallel drawn by the BBC was based on the similarities in destruction caused by the *protesters* in the two countries. If the cruel police treatment of the protesters generated sympathy, the similar destruction brought about by the BLM demonstrators might generate antipathy.

However, despite the emphasis on the destruction and confrontation, the BBC did report from the BLM protesters' perspective as well. It showed the strength of their sad feelings in relation to their demands:

In Houston, where George Floyd grew up, a 19-year-old protester told the Associated Press: "My question is how many more, how many more? I just want to live in a future where we all live in harmony and we're not oppressed."
(BBC, "George Floyd death: Minnesota governor decries violent protests," May 30, 2020)

Protester Anita Murray told the Washington Post: "It's scary to come down here in the middle of the pandemic, but how could I stay away?"
(BBC, "George Floyd: Minnesota clashes over death in police custody," May 28, 2020)

Protesters in the streets want one thing: the arrest and prosecution of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, whose knee was pressed into Floyd's neck for several minutes before he died.
(BBC, "George Floyd: Protesters set Minneapolis police station ablaze," May 29, 2020)

In addition, the BBC provided expert opinions about why protesters choose to loot:

In the US, hundreds of businesses have been damaged, and there has been widespread looting in LA and Minneapolis over the weekend.

However, Prof Stott warns that while it's easy to assume that riots and crowds are "irrational and chaotic, none of that is true - it's highly structured and meaningful for the people taking part".

"To some extent, looting is an expression of power - black citizens may have felt disempowered in relation to the police - but in the context of a riot, the rioters momentarily become more powerful than the police."
(BBC, "George Floyd death: Why do some protests turn violent?," May 31, 2020)

It is noteworthy that the BBC's depiction of the protesters in its own country who demonstrate for George Floyd received more positive coverage than the protesters in the U.S. and also the protesters in the 2011 London Riot. Their coverage described the public's reactions to the domestic protesters:

Protesters made their way to the embassy by marching along roads near the River Thames. Traffic was stopped in several places and protesters were applauded by onlookers.

Reverend Sally Hitchiner, associate vicar at St Martin-in-the-Fields church on Trafalgar Square, said she could see hundreds gathered for the protest from her workplace.

"I'm very sympathetic to the issue but also surprised to see the strength of emotion that has gathered people together," she said.

"Clearly they're not following lockdown and social distancing, but I think there's a huge amount of passion there and that's overriding their concerns.

(BBC, "George Floyd death: Thousands join UK protests," May 31, 2020)

In essence, the discourse that the BBC constructed of the BLM protest was mainly negative.

Confronting the police, ransacking stores and burning buildings were the common actions that the BBC depicted the protesters as taking. Also, it used more critical words than the two U.S. newspapers to describe the protesters and relied on official sources to comment on the demonstrators' actions. Nonetheless, unlike the two Chinese news media that interviewed no protesters or experts to make sense of the protest and demonstrators' actions, the BBC did help the readers to understand the protesters' actions and requests by not only giving voice to the protesters, but also consulting experts.

Similarly, even though *The Korean Times* clearly stated the reasons why people protested, it constructed a negative discourse about the BLM protesters. It also presented the protesters as looting stores, attacking journalists, and clashing with the police, and relied on official sources to make sense of the situation. In occasional cases, the protesters' violent actions were understood by giving voice to the demonstrators and the bystanders.

Instead of using the phrase "American residents" or "ordinary residents in the U.S." to describe the participants in the protest, similar to phrases it used in the case of the HK protest, *The Korean Times* called them "protesters" or "demonstrators." Rather than

emphasizing which industries they were from, *The Korean Times* focused on the protesters' racial background. It described that "[after] a tumultuous Friday night, racially diverse crowds took to the streets again for mostly peaceful protests in dozens of cities." Moreover, in one case, it utilized the word "mob" in reference to the violent protesters who burned a police car. Other damage and destruction were also commonly seen in *The Korean Times*' coverage:

Street protests spiraled into New York City's worst day of unrest in decades Saturday, as fires burned, windows got smashed and dangerous confrontations between demonstrators and officers flared amid crowds of thousands decrying police killings.

(*The Korean Times*, "Police cars destroyed, windows smashed as protests roil New York," May 31, 2020)

Later Friday, the network was again thrust into the story when hundreds of protesters confronted police outside CNN's downtown Atlanta headquarters. Activists spray-painted a large CNN logo outside the building, breaking a window and tagging doors. One protester climbed on top of the CNN sign and waved a "Black Lives Matter" flag to cheers from the crowd.

(*The Korean Times*, "CNN reporter arrested on live television in protest-ridden Minneapolis," May 30, 2020)

A Fox News reporter was pummeled and chased by protesters who had gathered outside the White House early Saturday as part of nationwide unrest following the death of George Floyd.

For several journalists across the country, the demonstrations were taking an ominous, dangerous turn.

(*The Korean Times*, "Fox News reporter attacked, chased from demonstration," May 31, 2020)

Similar to the BBC, the description of the protesters' violent behaviors is followed by the quotation of officials' condemnation. As a case in point, *The Korean Times* gave voice to Governor Walz: "The situation in Minneapolis is no longer in any way about the murder of George Floyd," Walz said. "It is about attacking civil society, instilling fear and disrupting our great cities."

Nonetheless, despite the portrayal of destruction and confrontation, *The Korean Times* still gave voice to the protesters to allow the audience to understand why they protested, which was significantly different from the two Chinese news media's discourse about the protesters, as they only reported the protests by observation and gave no voice to the demonstrators. *The Korean Times* wrote that:

"This is bigger than the pandemic," said Brooklyn protester Meryl Makielski, referring to the outbreak that, until recently, was killing hundreds of New Yorkers each day. "The mistakes that are happening are not mistakes. They're repeated violent terrorist offenses and people need to stop killing black people. Cops seem as though they've been trained to do so."
(*The Korean Times*, "Police cars destroyed, windows smashed as protests roil New York," May 23, 2020)

Furthermore, like *The NYT*'s interview with the general public, *The Korean Times*' interview with bystanders also showed sympathy for the protesters:

In Minneapolis, 29-year-old Sam Allkija, said at Saturday's protest that the destruction that has accompanied protests is a sign of the frustration and rage the black community has felt for a long time.

"I don't condone them," he said. "But you have to look deeper into why these riots are happening."
(*The Korean Times*, "Protests over George Floyd's death sweep across US," May 31, 2020)

To conclude, *The Korean Times* constituted a more critical discourse regarding the BLM protesters, which is similar to the BBC. In its coverage, it also emphasized the destruction and the confrontation with the police and used the word "mob" to describe violent protesters. However, unlike the two Chinese news media that only reported the protest by observation, *The Korean Times* gave voice to the protesters and let the readers learn about the situation from their perspective. But differently from the BBC, it did not conduct

interviews with experts who could provide background information to help the audience understand the protesters' violent actions.

Constructing News Discourse About the HK Police and Political Officials

When it comes to the discourse that the BBC and *The Korean Times* constructed about the Hong Kong police and political officials, both used a more neutral tone in comparison with the selected U.S. and Chinese news media. The portrayal of the brutality of HK police is also commonly seen in the BBC and *The Korean Times*' coverage, which shows the differences from *The GT* and *Pengpai* media that constructed HK police as heroes. Nevertheless, unlike *The NYT* and *The WSJ* that rarely quote the HK police and constructed the police as the antagonist of the protest, both the BBC and *The Korean Times* occasionally gave voice to the police and pointed out their injuries. As for the political leaders, both the BBC and *The Korean Times* cast a moderately negative light on Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Similar to the two U.S. newspapers, the BBC frequently pointed out the protesters' accusations of police brutality, but instead of only showing the protesters who were beaten by the police, it portrayed the clashes between the protesters and the police in detail and tried to present the readers a full picture of the scene.

The police, who used tear gas and rubber bullets, have been accused of excessive force by some rights groups.
(BBC, "Hong Kong extradition protests: Government suspends bill," June 15, 2019)

Police in some areas have responded to the demonstrators by shooting water cannons and pepper spray at protesters. Later in the day police fired rubber bullets and tear gas as anger spilled over into violence.
(BBC, "Hong Kong extradition: Hope and defiance among the protesters," June 12, 2019)

The second major incident caught on camera involved an officer who reportedly manhandled a woman among the protesters. But instead, his own truncheon was taken from him and he was beaten with it after being rushed into a corner.

He frantically drew his gun and pointed it at the crowd to disperse them, before being rescued by his fellow officers.

(BBC, “China describes Hong Kong protests as 'near terrorism',” August 14, 2019)

On the one hand, the usage of tear gas and rubber bullets and shooting of water cannons and pepper spray all show the cruelty of the HK police. On the other hand, the BBC’s explanation, the police officer’s “truncheon was taken from him and he was beaten with it after being rushed into a corner,” legitimized his action of pointing the gun at the protesters as self-protection. However, the BBC’s depiction of this scene is noteworthy. Rather than saying the protesters took his truncheon away from him and beat him, the BBC used a passive voice: “was taken” and “was beaten.” It did not directly attribute the violent actions to the protesters, which in turn might prevent the readers from generating a violent image of the protesters. Such a description might be an indication that the discourse of protesters might generate more sympathy than the discourse of police, even though the police’s actions were legitimated in several cases.

Other than mentioning the cruelty of the HK police and their clashes with the protesters, in several cases, the BBC also mentioned the situation the police were in and gave voice to the police and pointed out their injuries.

The police have become targets for radical demonstrators, who accuse them of excessive force.

A police media liaison officer was wounded in the leg with an arrow on Sunday.

"I hereby warn rioters not to use petrol bombs, arrows, cars or any deadly weapons to attack police officers," police spokesman Louis Lau said in a statement broadcast via Facebook late on Sunday.

"If they continue such dangerous actions, we would have no choice but to use the minimum force necessary, including live rounds, to fire back."
(BBC, Hong Kong: Protesters and police in fiery stand-off at university, November 18, 2019)

The quotation of when the police might use force gave the audience an opportunity to see the situation from the police's perspective and understand why the police might carry out certain actions. Mentioning the police injuries might also generate readers' sympathy. Therefore, compared with the two U.S. newspapers that rarely mentioned police injuries or gave voice to the police, the consumers of the BBC might be a bit more sympathetic to the police than readers of *The NYT* and *The WSJ*.

The Korean Times' discourse regarding the HK police is quite similar to the BBC's. Its coverage also pointed out police brutality frequently. Nonetheless, its repost of *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*'s coverage of the HK protest might be the reasons why *The Korean Times* mentioned the police's injuries more frequently than the BBC and gave the police more opportunities to express their point of view.

Officers and protesters suffered injuries, some needing hospital treatment, as police used batons and pepper spray to beat back a mob of masked demonstrators trying to storm the Legislative Council building.

Police then began charging the protest lines, beating them back and scattering them in different directions.

Police chief Stephen Lo Wai-chung, meanwhile, visited three injured officers at Queen Mary Hospital in Pok Fu Lam at about 2.30am.

"If they really have ideals and want Hong Kong to be good, can they help by doing this tonight?" he asked, referring to the violence and "meaningless" act of charging the Legco complex.

(*The Korean Times*, “‘Million-strong’ march against Hong Kong's extradition bill, June 10, 2019)

Officers also were hurt, some seriously, by rocks, bottles, traffic cones, metal barricades and other items thrown by protesters. Police spokesman Gong Weng Chun defended the use of tear gas and other nonlethal weapons, saying officers wouldn't have had to do so if they weren't facing a threat that could lead to serious injury or death.

(*The Korean Times*, “Hong Kong protesters vow to keep fighting extradition law,” June 13, 2019)

The injuries of the protesters and the police's actions of charging lines and beating the protestors all showed the police's cruelty. But similar to the feeling that the BBC's discourse might generate about the police, *The Korean Times'* occasional reference to the police's point of view and mentioning of their injuries might generate sympathy and encourage an understanding of the police. However, it is also important to note that, even though *The Korean Times'* description of the HK police might lead the readers to be empathetic with the police's plight sporadically, it did not construct the police as heroes who “risk their lives” to “save” civilians like the two Chinese news media did.

In terms of discourse about the political leaders, the BBC's and *The Korean Times'* construction is even more alike. Both constructed Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam as a leader who turned a blind eye to the people's requests. Also, they constituted the discourse of Chinese President Xi Jinping as a tough and ruthless leader who intends to further erode Hong Kongers' basic rights and has no tolerance for their request for a more self-ruled region. As cases in point:

Lam was elected in 2017 by a committee of mostly pro-Beijing Hong Kong elites. Critics have accused her of ignoring widespread opposition to the extradition law amendments.

Agnes Chow, a prominent Hong Kong activist who opposes the bill, said Lam "ignored the anger of more than a million Hong Kong citizens."
(*The Korean Times*, "Extradition bill pushes Hong Kong to a political crisis," June 11, 2019)

"Carrie Lam has ignored the feelings of Hong Kongers," Mr Ma, a 67-year-old protester, told the BBC. He said Ms Lam had "acted like it was no big deal" after a reported million people marched last week.
(BBC, "Hong Kong extradition bill: Protesters return to streets despite suspension," June 16, 2019)

"Under Hu Jintao [Mr Xi's predecessor] you had a central leadership that's much more willing to allow local leadership to deal with things their way - whereas Xi is focused a lot more on strengthening party leadership and discipline."
"There's a very clear position under Xi Jinping that China will not tolerate any activities that could potentially destabilise the rule of the Communist Party."
(BBC, "Hong Kong extradition protests: Do China demonstrations ever work?," June 10, 2019)

"We'll stay until the government drops this law and (Chinese President) Xi Jinping gives up on trying to turn Hong Kong into just another city in China like Beijing and Shanghai," he said.

The protests are widely seen as reflecting growing apprehension about relations with the mainland, where Xi has said he has zero tolerance for those demanding greater self-rule for Hong Kong.
(*The Korean Times*, "Hong Kong protesters vow to keep fighting extradition law," June 13, 2019)

In sum, the BBC and *The Korean Times* used a more neutral tone to construct the discourse about the HK police than the selected U.S. and Chinese news media. Instead of mainly constituting the police as the antagonists or heroes of the HK protest, the BBC and *The Korean Times* not only pointed out police brutality, but also occasionally gave them an opportunity to share their point of view. Nevertheless, when it comes to constructing the discourse of political leaders in Hong Kong, the BBC and *The Korean Times* did not cast positive light on either Chief Executive Carrie Lam or Chinese president Xi Jinping, which is similar to the two U.S. newspapers' discourse regarding the two political leaders.

Constructing News Discourse About the BLM Police and American Political Officials

With regards to the discourse about the police and American political officials in the BLM protest, a distinction can be found in the BBC's and *The Korean Times*' coverage. The BBC cast a positive light not only on the police, but also on former President Trump and other Republican political leaders. In contrast, *The Korean Times* used a critical tone to portray the police and a neutral tone to depict President Trump, but it portrayed other political officials more positively than the two Chinese news media, *The GT* and *Pengpai*, did. Moreover, in their coverage, both referenced the HK protest.

Under the discourse that the BBC constructed, the police were not often blamed or portrayed as responsible for brutality, even when depicting the actions of former police officer Derek Chauvin. While both *The NYT* and *The WSJ* depicted his actions as highly disturbing, the BBC portrayed Chauvin's actions by giving voice to President Trump who described the tragedy as "a terrible, terrible thing" and was really upset when he saw the video of how George Floyd was mistreated. In addition, the BBC only portrayed the video of the death of George Floyd as "reigniting US anger over police killings of black Americans." Other than "terrible," "upset" and "anger," no strong words were used to describe the incident. Furthermore, one of the articles explains how George Floyd died. In that section, the BBC wrote that:

...the complaint states that the post-mortem examination did not find evidence of "traumatic asphyxia or strangulation".

The medical examiner noted Mr Floyd had underlying heart conditions and the combination of these, "potential intoxicants in his system" and being restrained by the officers "likely contributed to his death"

The report says Mr Chauvin had his knee on Mr Floyd's neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds - almost three minutes of which was after Mr Floyd became non-responsive.

The Minnesota police handbook states that officers trained on how to compress a detainee's neck without applying direct pressure to the airway can use a knee under its use-of-force policy. This is regarded as a non-deadly-force option.
(BBC, "George Floyd death: Clashes as protests spread across US," May 30, 2020)

The mentioning of no evidence of "traumatic asphyxia or strangulation," "potential intoxicants in his system...likely contributed to his death" and the regard of chokehold as a "non-deadly-force" in the Minnesota police handbook all direct the blame away from the police officer and imply that the police officer was only responsible for restraining Mr. Floyd rather than for his death.

Then, when discussing the issue of police brutality in the U.S., the BBC quoted CNN's interview with Robert O'Brien, the national security advisor of President Trump. O'Brien commented that "I don't think there's systemic racism. There are some racist police, I think they're the minority, I think they're the few bad apples and we need to root them out" (BBC, 2020). The BBC used O'Brien's comment without giving voice to the opposition, which suggests that the BBC constructed the discourse about the police in the BLM protest as not signifying systemic racism.

Nevertheless, the police's actions were pointed out as importantly associated with how protesters would respond and were considered responsible for generating more violent protests (Cheung, 2020). One of the BBC's articles interviewed two experts—one studies the 2011 England Riots, and the other is a social scientist at UCLA. They explained that "[riots] are a product of interactions - largely to do with the nature of the way police treats

crowds... [deploying] the National Guard, using rubber bullets, tear gas, and pepper spray...can exacerbate an already-tense situation.” Then, the experts made reference to the HK protest. They illustrated that the protests started peacefully but were met with “a series of police tactics that were seen as heavy-handed - including the firing of large amounts of tear gas at young protesters - as moves that galvanised protesters and made them more confrontational.” Based on the explanation of the experts, the police in the BLM were also responsible for the occurrence of violent protests, as they used heavy-handed tactics as well (Cheung, 2020).

When it comes to the discourse of the political leaders, Democrats Tim Walz, Jacob Frey and Ted Wheelers were constructed as political leaders who need to be responsible for the chaos due to underestimating the size of the protests or being weak on crime. In contrast, the discourse of President Trump was formed positively. The BBC constructed Mr. Trump as a traditional president who urged healing, condemned violence, sympathized with the victim, and cared about the safety of his cities. People who attacked him are his political rivals—Democratic politicians or cities:

Mr Trump has blamed the mayor of Minneapolis - a Democrat - for failing to control the protests, which are the worst since the president took office.
The president's Democratic Party rival, Joe Biden, has accused him of giving oxygen to bigotry and said those responsible for Mr Floyd's death must be held accountable.
(BBC, “George Floyd death: Widespread unrest as curfews defied across US,” May 31, 2020)

Many people in Kansas City say the president's plan is not what this place needs. Kansas City leans Democratic, and many are opposed to the president's policies and object to his aggressive law-and-order mandate.
(BBC, Trump to send 'surge' of hundreds of federal agents to cities, July 23, 2020)

Furthermore, it is also noteworthy that other Trump allies such as Attorney General William Barr and previously mentioned national security advisor Robert O'Brien were all quoted without mentioning criticism from other politicians, experts or the general public, which indicates that the BBC treated their comments seriously and did not cast them in a negative light.

Unlike the BBC's positive portrayal of the police in the BLM protest, *The Korean Times* constructed a mainly negative discourse about the police and a neutral discourse about President Trump. Nevertheless, it constituted a more positive discourse regarding other politicians in the U.S. Portraying the violent actions carried out by the police is one focus of *The Korean Times*. In addition, it specifically emphasizes how journalists were mistreated by the police, even though there were few reports indicating that the Korean journalists were mistreated while they covered the domestic candlelight movement. Similar to the discourse that *The Korean Times* constructed of the HK police, the police in BLM were able to share their point of view. Their injuries were also mentioned.

...and police used batons, rubber bullets and pepper spray to push back crowds in some cities. Many departments reported officers were injured, while social media was awash in images of police using forceful tactics, throwing protesters to the ground, using bicycles as shields, and trampling a protester while on horseback. (*The Korean Times*, "Protests over George Floyd's death sweep across US," May 31, 2020)

Police Commissioner Dermot Shea said more than 200 people were arrested and multiple officers were injured in Friday night's protests, including one who lost a tooth.

Asked to comment on videos that showed officers shoving peaceful protesters to the ground and hitting people with batons, Shea said those acts would be investigated.

But, he said, "It is very hard to practice de-escalation when there is a brick being thrown at your head."

(*The Korean Times*, "Police cars destroyed, windows smashed as protests roil New York," May 31, 2020)

In Louisville, WAVE-TV was on the air covering a demonstration when video showed a police officer aiming a rifle at reporter Kaitlin Rust and her crew. She was heard yelling, "I've been shot! I've been shot!" and described them as pepper bullets.

(*The Korean Times*, "Fox News reporter attacked, chased from demonstration," May 31, 2020)

In terms of the discourse about U.S. political officials, *The Korean Times* mentioned President Trump's comment regarding the tragedy of George Floyd; he said it was a "very, very sad event." His comment about the incident somewhat suggested that he was sympathetic to Mr. Floyd. Nonetheless, another comment made by President Trump was portrayed negatively by *The Korean Times*; it wrote that

Comments from President Donald Trump stoked the anger, when he fired off a series of tweets criticizing Minnesota's response, ridiculing people who protested outside the White House and warning that if protesters breached the fence, "they would ... have been greeted with the most vicious dogs, and most ominous weapons, I have ever seen."

(*The Korean Times*, "Protests over George Floyd's death sweep across US," May 31, 2020)

The words "stoked anger" "fired off" and "ridiculing" all negatively portrayed President Trump's comments, and in turn, cast him in a negative light.

Apart from President Trump, *The Korean Times* cast a positive light on other politicians such as Governor Tim Walz. Unlike the two Chinese news media that utilized Walz's tweets to reaffirm the chaotic and dangerous protest scene, *The Korean Times* presents the positive impact of Walz's apology for the arresting of the CNN journalist by giving voice to a media law professor:

At a later news conference, Walz said that "I take full responsibility. There is absolutely no reason something like that should happen ... This is a very public apology to that team."

Walz's words in support of journalists have impact at a time when the news media is often under attack, said Jane E. Kirtley, Silha Professor of Media Ethics and Law and director of the Silha Center at the University of Minnesota.

"It's really important for the governor to make that kind of statement to emphasize to everyone, especially law enforcement, that the press has an important job to do ... and they need to be respected"

(*The Korean Times*, "CNN reporter arrested on live television in protest-ridden Minneapolis," May 30, 2020)

Moving from *The Korean Times*' construction of U.S. political officials, it is interesting to note that *The Korean Times* reported the Chinese diplomats' comment on the BLM protest and how the diplomats draw connections between the HK protest and the BLM protest. *The Korean Times* wrote that:

Chinese diplomats and state media have seized on the violent unrest sparked by the death of George Floyd to accuse the US of hypocrisy and compare American protesters with pro-democracy demonstrators in Hong Kong.

Beijing has long been infuriated by criticism from Western capitals, especially Washington, over its handling of the protests that shook Hong Kong last year.

China has insisted that "foreign forces" are to blame for the turmoil in Hong Kong, where pro-democracy protesters — described by Beijing as rioters — have marched in the millions since June last year and often clashed with the police.

(*The Korean Times*, China criticizes US for 'chronic disease' of racism, June 2, 2020)

Other than directly suggesting Beijing retaliated for the criticism from the West, the description "Beijing has long been infuriated by criticism from Western capitals, especially Washington, over its handling of the protests that shook Hong Kong last year" seems to imply that Beijing might use the BLM protest as an opportunity to fight back against

Washington's criticism. Furthermore, in the following paragraph, China's insistence on the existence of foreign forces suggested that Chinese narratives might not be trustworthy.

To sum up, the BBC and *The Korean Times* constructed two different discourses about the police in the BLM protest and political leaders in the U.S. Compared with the two U.S. newspapers, the BBC portrayed the police more positively. Rather than accusing the police of brutality and racism, the BBC directed the blame away by giving voice to political officials and referencing the police handbook. And when it comes to U.S. political officials, the BBC constructed President Trump and other Republicans positively by presenting the beneficial actions that Trump did and without including criticism while quoting the Republicans. In contrast, *The Korean Times* constructed a somewhat more negative discourse of the police by focusing on the brutal actions they carried out and their attack of journalists. Moreover, it formed a neutral discourse regarding President Trump but a positive discourse about other political officials. Lastly, it is interesting to note that both the BBC and *The Korean Times* referenced the HK protest while covering the BLM protest.

Overall, the news discourses about the HK and BLM protests that the BBC and *The Korean Times* constructed not only reflected their non-tense relations with the U.S. and China, but also suggested that political ideology, racial and cultural background should also be taken into account as factors that are likely to shape news discourses about protests.

The British news organization, the BBC, constructed discourses about the HK and BLM protesters and police that appear to reflect the Sino-U.K. and U.S.-U.K. relations. When covering the HK protest, differently from the two U.S. newspapers that portrayed

the HK protesters as victims, or the two Chinese news media that depicted the protesters as mobs, the BBC used a less sympathetic tone than the U.S. newspapers and a more positive tone than the Chinese news media to construct the discourse about the protesters. The BBC not only depicted the protesters as being brave but also pointed out the destruction that ensued. Similarly, the BBC also used a more neutral tone to describe the HK police. In its discourse, on the one hand, the police treated protesters cruelly. On the other hand, the police were also being hurt and were faced with challenging situations, which in turn reflects the not close, not tense Sino-U.K. relations at the time.

When it comes to the BLM protest, the BBC seems to use a more critical tone than the two U.S. newspapers to depict the BLM protesters, as they are occasionally referred to as “rioters”—a word that the two U.S. newspapers were rarely seen to use—and the protesters are frequently portrayed as confronting the police, burning buildings, and ransacking stores. As for the police and political officials, the BBC seems to use a more positive tone than the chosen U.S. news media. Police brutality was also seen once or twice among the analyzed BBC articles. In addition, the BBC directed blame away from the police by quoting U.S. police officials and the police handbook. Additionally, the BBC also portrayed President Trump as conducting beneficial actions such as urging healing and condemning violence. Thus, the BBC’s discourse about the BLM protest sufficiently mirrors U.S.-U.K. relations as friends and allies.

The South Korean newspaper, *The Korean Times*’ discourse about the HK protest also reflects its not-so-close but somewhat friendly relations with mainland China. Similar to the BBC, it also used a less sympathetic tone than the U.S. newspapers and a more

positive tone than the Chinese news media to construct the discourse about the protesters. It explained the reasons why people protest and the protesters' demands, but at the same time, it pointed out the damages the protesters contributed to. For the police, it commonly mentioned how they treat protesters brutally, but similar to the BBC, it also drew attention to the police injuries and gave the readers opportunities to learn about the situation from the police's perspective. Nevertheless, neither the BBC nor *The Korean Times* cast the Hong Kong chief executive or the Chinese president in a positive light.

However, in terms of the discourse of the BLM protest, *The Korean Times*' coverage did not mirror its close relations with the U.S. Despite its negative portrayal of the BLM protesters by emphasizing their confrontation with the police and the destruction, it did not cast the police or President Trump in a positive light. The police were mainly depicted as being brutal to the protesters and journalists, and President Trump's comment was portrayed as stoking anger and ridiculing the protesters. As suggested by Kim and Shahin (2019), newspapers' political ideology impacts how international protests are covered. For example, when covering the South Korean candlelight protest in 2017, liberal news media *The New York Times* and *Kyunghyang Shinmun* supported the protest in their coverage and used protesters' information as sources. In this case, it is likely that the left-leaning *Korean Times* used a similar depiction as *The NYT* to portray President Trump's comment negatively and accuse the police of brutality.

All in all, in their coverage of the HK protest, the BBC and *The Korean Times* showed China's authoritarian and untrustworthy features by pointing out the tough stance President Xi took towards political dissidents and the Chinese news media narratives of

the HK protests. Then, in their reporting of the BLM protest, the BBC presented police brutality in the U.S. as a rare case by giving voice to national security advisor Robert O'Brien; *The Korean Times* showed the U.S. still cares about freedom of speech by affirming the value of Governor Walz's apologies regarding the police's arrest of the CNN journalist. Although they constructed a relatively positive national image of the U.S. in comparison to the image they constituted of China, their more neutral portrayal of the two overseas protests in contrast to the chosen U.S. and Chinese news media's depiction of the international protests suggested that both the selected US and Chinese media were far less objective than they claimed to be, and they did use the protests to burnish negative images of each other in ways that are not reflected in the BBC or *The Korean Times*.

Moreover, the BBC's and *The Korean Times*' discourse about the HK and BLM protests suggests that relations between the nations where the news media are located and the nations where the protests took place are well reflected in the discourse of Western news media—*The NYT*, *The WSJ* and the BBC—about overseas protests. However, the relations were not sufficiently reflected in both non-Western—Chinese and South Korean—news media, implying that, other than political ideology, the racial and cultural background of the countries where the news media are located should also be taken into consideration. Both China and South Korea are racially homogenous. According to the latest population census of China (2021), more than 91 percent of the Chinese population is Han Chinese. Also, only about 5 percent of the Korean population are non-ethnic Korean (Shim, 2021). This lack of racial diversity might lead to a lack of understanding for unfair treatment of African Americans, which in turn leads to a negative portrayal of the BLM

protesters. Furthermore, the two countries share a common tradition of Confucianism—an ideology that emphasizes qualities like propriety, etiquette and loyalty. Therefore, destruction, looting and burning might be inconsistent with some of Chinese and Koreans' basic beliefs in Confucianism, in turn, making it another possible factor in portraying the BLM protesters negatively.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

In March 2021, Gallup's public opinion poll revealed that Americans' unfavorable view of China has hit the lowest point since the normalization of Sino-U.S. relations in 1979 (Younis, 2021). Simultaneously, as the trade war between the two countries worsens, the Chinese public hold a more negative view of the U.S. as well. On Weibo, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter, people commented negatively under posts that shared news about the U.S.

The unfavorable news discourse constructed by the media in the two countries is likely one of the reasons why the American and Chinese general public hold a negative view of each other. According to Robert Park (1955), news is a form of social knowledge. By using commonly used and shared languages, news plays a vital role in providing the type of knowledge that is culturally bounded and socially constructed for its audience. The social knowledge that news media provide not only helps people make sense of everyday life, but also constructs reality for people (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The realities that news media construct undoubtedly include foreign realities, which are used to build the national images of a foreign country and ultimately might sway public opinion regarding that country. In the third decade of the 21st century, the relationship between the United States and China as two economic superpowers as at its most tense since the normalization of their ties in 1979 (CFR, 2020). The ongoing trade war, the disputes over human rights issues in Xinjiang, and the handling of the pandemic have all led their relations to deteriorate. The news media in the two countries also seem to be in a competition of constructing a negative discourse of each other.

This project analyzed two U.S. newspapers, *The New York Times* (NYT) and *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ), and two Chinese news media, *The Global Times* (GT) and *Pengpai*, and examined their discourses of the Hong Kong (HK) and Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests to learn how news media in the U.S. and China constructed each other's national images when the two countries were in crises. Furthermore, it aimed to find out how national interests and international relations, as well as the different journalism fields in the U.S. and China, were reflected in their news coverage of the domestic protests and the overseas protests. Then, to get a more holistic result regarding how international news coverage of overseas protests echoes national interests and international relations, this project also analyzed British and South Korean news media's coverage of the HK and BLM protests.

To achieve these goals, this project carried out a four-way comparison to analyze the discourse that the two U.S. newspapers constructed of the HK and BLM protests and the discourse that the two Chinese news media constituted of the same demonstrations.

The first result shows how national interests are reflected in each news media's coverage of the protests. For the two U.S. newspapers, destruction in their own country seems to be more of a concern than destruction in Hong Kong. When constructing the discourse of the domestic and overseas protesters, they delineated the overseas HK protesters' violent behaviors as the only solution to the authorities' ignoring their demands, but presented the domestic BLM demonstrators' violent actions as needing to be stopped by giving voice to political officials and civil rights leaders condemning them. Moreover, they used a more sympathetic and positive tone to portray overseas HK protesters than domestic BLM protesters, as BLM protesters were more commonly shown as confronting

the police and causing destruction, but the HK protesters are more frequently depicted as victims who suffered from being tear-gassed and pepper-sprayed. Even in cases when HK protesters used violent protest tactics, the two U.S. newspapers uses the passive voice to describe their actions, a technique that is rarely used when portraying the BLM protesters and is likely to prevent readers from having a negative feeling about the protesters. The discourse the two U.S. newspapers constituted about the police also reflects their concern about domestic destruction. Even though they accuse the police of brutality, the two U.S. newspapers also depicted the domestic police as struggling to walk the fine line between maintaining order and preventing excessive use of power by giving voice to them to learn about the tough situations they faced. Nonetheless, the foreign police were mainly presented as officers who used excessive force against the protesters. Their voice was rarely heard.

Moving to the Chinese news media, despite the fact that the overseas BLM protesters were portrayed as having legitimate reasons for demonstrating, and occasionally the two Chinese news media used a more sympathetic tone to construct the discourse about the BLM protesters than the domestic Hong Kong protesters, both domestic and international protesters were cast in a negative light. As explained by Elizabeth Economy, Asia Director at the Council on Foreign Relations, and Jessica Chen Weiss, a professor at Cornell University, the state-run *GT* and *Pengpai* are supposed to uphold several national interests including preventing negative international news discourse about China from seeping into domestic discourse to erode the legitimacy of the Chinese Central government, and reducing the risks of enlightening mainlanders to request more political freedom. In these media's discourse of domestic and international protesters and police, these goals and

national interests were found reflected in the coverage (Buckley & Meyers, 2019; Feng & Cheng, 2020).

When constructing the discourse of domestic protesters, the two Chinese media characterized the domestic protesters as a few radicals whose reasons for protesting were creating chaos and destruction and overthrowing the HK government in collusion with foreign forces. They did not represent the general public. The “real” general public supported the Hong Kong and the Chinese Central governments and the extradition law. They were not dissatisfied with either government. By presenting the protesters as radicals who aimed to overthrow the Hong Kong government and by emphasizing they did not represent the general public, the coverage led the audience to believe that it is not the Hong Kong or mainland governments’ problem that contributed to the protest. Then, by the news media’ highlighting the destruction and damages, the audience might perceive the threats brought by the demonstration, which in turn, prevent them generating sympathy for the protesters and minimize the risk of inspiring mainlanders to demand more political freedom.

With regard to the overseas BLM protest, upholding the U.S.’s national interests is not a concern for the Chinese news media. In addition, it might be better to cast the United States in a negative light, given the tense Sino-U.S. relations. So, when covering the protest in a rival country, the two Chinese news media clearly stated the reason why people in the U.S. were protesting and emphasized the fact that the American general public was participating in the protest. They also repeatedly pointed out that the American public was dissatisfied with the U.S. government by referencing various survey results. However, they constructed the discourse of the BLM protesters negatively by focusing on reporting their

clashes with the police and using strong words such as mobs to label them. It is possible that the negative portrayal of the overseas BLM protesters might also be due to a concern of encouraging its own citizens to demonstrate and a way to portray everything American as negative—the government and the protesters.

In relation to the media discourse of the police, the Chinese news media's coverage also mirrored their national interests. Both Chinese news media constructed the domestic [Chinese] police as heroes who used restrained but effective force to combat the chaos and “radicals,” but accused the overseas [U.S.] police of using brutal force and not doing enough to protect businesses. In the discourse that the Chinese news media constructed of the BLM protest, both the protesters and the police in the U.S. are depicted negatively, which brought up a bigger topic: How did the selected U.S. and Chinese news media construct the national images of each other in their coverage of foreign protests?

The analysis of discourses that the two U.S. newspapers constructed of the HK protest and the two Chinese news media constituted of the BLM protest suggests that as U.S.—China relations deteriorated to the lowest point since the normalization of their relations, the national images they formed of each other are not only negative but also similar. By defining the HK protest as pro-democracy, emphasizing that HK's position as a former British colony sets it apart from mainland China, and quoting the protesters' concern of facing unfair trials in mainland China, *The NYT* and *The WSJ* implicitly constructed China as an undemocratic and authoritarian country that has an opaque legal system. By referencing the Tiananmen crackdown, the disappearance of two people who published content that the Chinese government objected to, and the situation in Xinjiang, the two U.S. newspapers suggested that China is a country that has serious human rights

issues in regards to tolerating political dissent and allowing freedom of speech. By pointing out that the Chinese news coverage of the HK protest is misleading, highly filtered and used to sway public opinion, and that China broke its promise to Hong Kong, the two U.S. news media implied that China is an untrustworthy country that suppresses opposite trustworthy viewpoints.

Then, in the coverage of the BLM protest, the Chinese news media seemed to retaliate for the image that the U.S. news media constructed of China. In an interview with NPR (Feng & Cheng, 2020, para.8), the editor-in-chief of *The GT*, Hu Xijin, explained the tough stance that China took towards the U.S. as a natural response: “When the U.S. continually attacks China, mocks China, can you expect us to say nothing?” His response is reflected in the national image that *The GT* and *Pengpai* constructed of the United States. Although the U.S. news media are independent from the U.S. government, the two Chinese news media still accused U.S. news media of not presenting the whole picture of the HK protest, to present the United States as an untrustworthy country. Such a national image of the U.S. works because the Chinese news media are state-run, and the Chinese public are likely to assume that the U.S. news media operate similarly to the Chinese news media—representing the points of view of their government, which in turn, shows an untrustworthy United States. In addition, by bringing up how minorities and poor people were mistreated, and how a Black journalist was arrested while doing his job, coverage of the BLM protest constructed the U.S. as a country that also has human rights issues and an opaque policing system. This depiction of the U.S. also laid the foundation for the two Chinese media to accuse the U.S. of having a double standard and U.S. politicians of being hypocritical. The two Chinese news media claimed that the U.S. has its own human rights issues regarding

their treatment of minorities and poor people, yet they accused China of having such problems. It is a country that claimed to care about freedom of press, but arrested the journalist who covered the protest on the spot and accused China of having no freedom of speech. Then, the two Chinese news media explained that it is politically correct in the U.S. to portray China terribly.

The national images that the two countries' news media constructed of each other also reflect the two countries' competition for a global reputation and status as a world leader. This can be seen through news media in both countries pointing out that the other country's news coverage is untrustworthy. Furthermore, on the Chinese news media side, the two news outlets directly suggested that the U.S. has started to decay and has lost its leading position on the world stage. Also, they proposed implicitly that China is better than the U.S. by accusing the U.S. of having a double standard and showing that China cares about their poor people but the U.S. does not. The accusation implies that China is doing a great job in many issues that the U.S. accused China of having. However, since the United States has a double-standard on these issues, the U.S. officials rated China as having a poor performance on these issues. On the U.S. news media side, the two newspapers portray China as an authoritarian country that has various human-right issues, which implicitly suggests that China cannot qualify as a world leader. In addition, the fact that the U.S. is a democratic country that has freedom of speech and respects human rights is taken-for-granted knowledge. Although the two U.S. newspapers explicitly mentioned that China is a threat that the U.S. needs to confront politically, economically, and militarily, bringing up a comparison between China and the U.S. seems unnecessary to suggest that the U.S. is better than China.

The national images that the chosen U.S. and Chinese news outlets formed of each other in their coverage of overseas protests and the discourse they constructed of the domestic and international protests all reflected the tense Sino-U.S. relations.

The selected U.S. newspapers' depiction of China as a threat that the U.S. needs to confront, the chosen Chinese news media's explanation of why the U.S. portrayed China terribly as it is politically correct to present China negatively, and news media in both countries' construction of a completely negative image of each other all frame the other country as a rival.

The two U.S. newspapers' discourse of overseas protesters and police also echoes the strained relations between the U.S. and China. The findings of earlier studies suggested that the overseas protesters are portrayed more positively (Kilgo et al., 2018) and the police are portrayed more negatively if the relations between the nations that the news media are located and the nations that the protest took place are tense (Fang, 1994; Wittebols, 1996). In line with this research, when constructing the discourse of the protests that took place in opposing countries, *The NYT* and *The WSJ* constructed a dominantly positive discourse about the HK protesters, but a totally negative discourse about the HK police.

Nonetheless, surprisingly, the two Chinese news media *The GT* and *Pengpai's* discourse about the protest that took place in the U.S. presents a different aspect. Although the two Chinese also depicted the police and political officials in the U.S. completely negatively, they did not cast a positive light on overseas protesters. Their negative portrayal of the BLM protesters on the one hand suggested that people who showed the United States—China's rival—had racial issues and brought destruction and chaos to the country were not depicted positively by the two Chinese news media, which breaks the ancient

proverb that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” On the other hand, it indicated that the two Chinese news media portrayed all people involved in the protest in the U.S. negatively. The two Chinese news media’s critical depiction of all people engaged in the protest also mirrors the fact that the United States is the current rival of China. In addition, it appears to suggest that protests take on a different meaning than a representation of democracy in an authoritarian country like China, and the Chinese news media might not cast a positive light on any protesters to prevent Chinese citizens from demonstrating and demanding for more political freedom.

The analysis of the BBC’s and *The Korean Times*’ discourses about the HK and the BLM protests provides a more holistic perspective regarding how the discourses of foreign protests were constructed by news media in countries that do not have tense relations with the countries where the protests took place. Both the U.K. and South Korea are allies of the U.S. And neither have close or tense relations with China. The results showed that the British news media, the BBC, used a less sympathetic tone than the two U.S. newspapers and a more positive tone than the Chinese news media to construct the discourse about the HK protesters and a more neutral tone to describe the HK police than both chosen the U.S. and Chinese news media. In regards to the BLM protesters and police, the BBC seems to use a more critical tone than the two U.S. newspapers to depict the BLM protesters but a more positive tone than the chosen U.S. news media to describe the police in the BLM protest. The South Korean newspaper, *The Korean Times*, also used a less sympathetic tone than the U.S. newspapers and a more positive tone than the Chinese news media to construct the discourse about the HK protesters and a more neutral tone to describe the

police. When it comes to the BLM protest, however, it presented both the BLM protesters and police negatively.

The analysis of the control news media group's news coverage of the two protests indicated that relations between the nations where the news media are located and the nations where the protests took place appear to have an impact on the discourse of Western news media—*The NYT*, *The WSJ* and the BBC—about overseas protests. However, that did not appear to be the case in non-Western—Chinese and South Korean—news media. Their coverage of the BLM protest suggested that the racial and cultural background of the countries where the news media are located and the news media's political ideology might also need to be taken into consideration. As argued by Kim and Shahin (2019), newspapers' political ideology impacts how international protests are covered. Thus, in this case, it is to be expected that the left-leaning *Korean Times* used a similar depiction as *The NYT* to cast the police in the BLM protest negatively. Besides, both China and South Korea are racially homogenous and share a common tradition of Confucianism—an ideology that emphasizes propriety, etiquette and loyalty. It is possible that this lack of racial diversity leads to a lack of understanding of unfair treatment of African Americans, which in turn leads to a negative portrayal of the BLM protesters. It is also likely that destruction, looting and burning might be inconsistent with some of Chinese and Koreans' basic beliefs in Confucianism, making it another possible factor for portraying the BLM protesters negatively.

Lastly, the U.S. and Chinese news media's discourse about domestic and overseas political leaders also appeared to be influenced by the differences in the U.S. and Chinese journalism fields. The U.S. news media, as the watchdogs of the government, portrayed

both the domestic and foreign political leaders negatively. In contrast, the Chinese news media, as the mouthpieces of the government, cast their domestic political leaders in a completely positive light, but politicians in the opposing country in a totally negative light.

Overall, this study of how the selected U.S. and Chinese news organizations constructed the national images of each other during a time when the two countries were in crises and had tense relations with each other found that the national images the two countries' news media formed of each other are negative and similar – with each country portrayed as abusing human rights, suppressing opposite viewpoints and weaponizing its media against the other. Besides, these images not only echoed their strained relations but also their competition for the position of world leader.

Furthermore, this project's analysis of the chosen U.S. news discourse of their domestic and foreign protests reaffirmed the previous finding that the overseas protesters are portrayed more positively (Kilgo et al., 2018) and the police are portrayed more negatively if the relations between the nations that the news media are located and the nations that the protest took place are tense (Fang, 1994; Wittebols, 1996). The selected Chinese news discourse of their domestic and foreign protests added a new perspective to research about how international relations are reflected in international news coverage of overseas protests and provided an example of how news media in authoritarian countries cover domestic and overseas protests.

The analysis of the British and Korean news discourse of the two protests added a new aspect regarding how news media in countries that do not have tense relations with the countries where the protests took place cover the protests in their countries. The result indicated that international relations were well mirrored in Western news discourse of the

overseas protests. Political ideology, cultural and racial background are factors that scholars need to take into account while analyzing non-Western news coverage of foreign protests.

In conclusion, at the theory level, the national images that the U.S. and Chinese news media constructed of each other show how two economic superpowers in tense relations might use media images to fight for their reputation and role as a world leader. Practically, the project gives the two countries a basic idea of how the other country forms their national image. By being aware of the images that the opposing country forms of them, it is possible for the two countries to come up with solutions to improve their national images abroad, as an enhanced national image could create a more favorable climate for tourism, international trade, the international job market, and international relations (Anholt, 2008).

The national image that the U.S. and Chinese news media formed of each other seems to play a role in impacting the public opinion in the two countries. A Gallup poll survey shows that Americans' unfavorable view of China has hit the lowest point since the normalization of the Sino-U.S. relations in 1979 (Younis, 2021). In another survey conducted by Pew Research Center, when Americans were asked to fill in an open-ended questionnaire about "the first thing that came to mind when they think of China," nearly 10 percent emphasized China's "curtailed personal freedoms—whether in the form of censorship, the inability to protest or a lack of freedom of religion." Then, around three percent of Americans brought up the high growth rate of the Chinese economy, and about 13 percent of Americans mentioned that China is a general threat to the U.S. (Schumacher & Silver, 2021).

On the other hand, Chinese public opinion regarding the U.S. is also overwhelmingly negative. Because public opinion polling is highly censored by the Chinese government, people's comments on Weibo give us a glimpse of the Chinese public opinion regarding the U.S. On Weibo, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter, several commonly seen comments about the U.S. usually generate thousands of likes. For example, when the Chinese news media report gun-related events in the U.S., people comment that "the United States, a country that has freedom, experiences gunfight on a daily basis" and "it is creepy to live in the U.S. There are the possibilities of being killed at any moment. Our China is better than the United States, and I am appreciative to be a Chinese." When the news media covers the COVID situation in the U.S., a popular comment becomes "wearing a mask, human rights are gone; without wearing a mask, human beings are gone." When the news covers the protests in the U.S., the most favored comments become "beautiful sight taking place in the U.S."—a comment originally made by Speaker Pelosi during the HK protest—and "The United States is known for having a double-standard."

The results shown in the public opinion polls and comments on the Chinese social media platform correspond well to the national images that the U.S. and Chinese news media constructed of each other. As argued by Dell'Orto (2013), news media play a mediator role in international affairs. They help the general public to interpret foreign reality, and in turn, act as the foundation for foreign policy and actions. In this case, the negative national images might already impact the general public's support for different policies. A Pew Research Center survey indicated that the American general public supports a tougher policy toward China. Seventy percent of Americans say the U.S. needs to promote human rights in China, regardless of the possibility of damaging economic

relations with China; 53 percent of Americans suggest that the U.S. should “get tougher with China on economic issues” (Silver et al., 2021).

Limitation and Future Research

This project only chooses the British and South Korean news media to form a control group and analyzes their discourse about the two protests. Even though the two countries have no tense relations with the U.S. and China, both are U.S. allies, so there might be fewer nuances in comparison with a Chinese ally’s news coverage of the two protests. Thus, it might be necessary for future studies to choose a news media that is located in countries that are friends to China, Russia for example. Apart from only focusing on analyzing media text, it would be great to conduct interviews with journalists who covered the HK and BLM protests to learn the factors that impacted their decision of what to cover in the protest. Such interviews with Chinese and Korean journalists might be particularly relevant because we could learn what factors other than national interests and international relations impacted their coverage of the BLM protest.

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